







MIDLAND POEMS.

BY

ORSAMUS CHARLES DAKE.

33

LINCOLN: 4 Feb.
STATE JOURNAL COMPANY.
1873.



PS 1499
II 72

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TO MY WIFE.

O might October days but linger—
Linger and lengthen without surcease,
The fading glory fade ever, and fling her
Mystic mantle in charmed peace
On woodland, and prairie, and sunlight splendor—
How sweet were dreaming 'mid scenes so tender!

The low winds murmuring and moving,
Like spirits aimless in Edens vast,
Should weave fair legends of happy loving—
The long, dim story of all the past:
And, sweetest by far to thee and me,
The lyrical voices of chivalry.

But autumn days of peace are waning:
The far horizon grows sharp and cold:
The keen winds utter but shrill complaining—
Harsh tune for themes of the days of old.
So I must sing, if I sing at all,
Of things unwelcome that now befall.

I bring you songs to fit the weather—
Tales, whose sad burden is grief to me:
Perchance, ere long, we may roam together,
'Mid knights and ladies of high degree,
Where lordly castles tower o'er the hills,
And olden beauty the dream-land fills.

STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA,
November 6, 1873.

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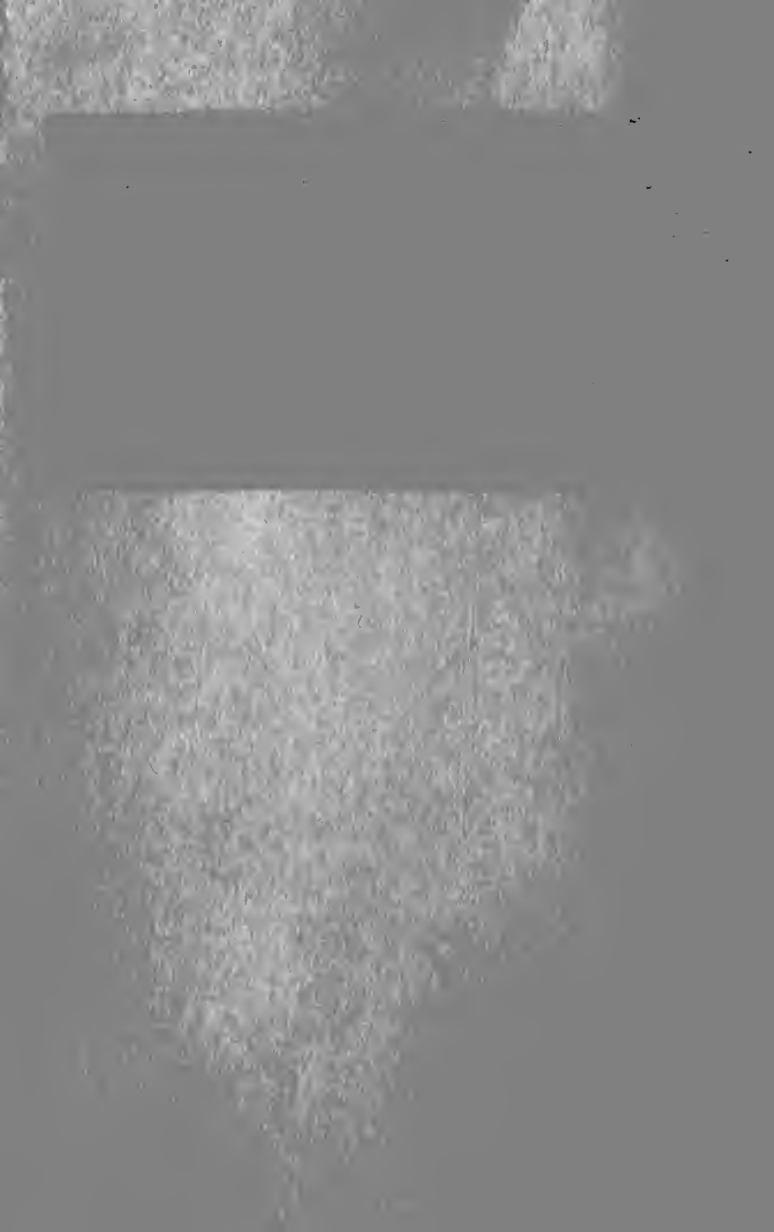
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ERRATA.

Page 68, 15th line, 6th word—for “word” read “world.”

Page 102, 12th line, 4th word—for “*fauteuille*” read “*fauteuil*.”

Page 243, 11th line, last word—for “hills” read “rills.”



NINETEENTH CENTURY PICTURES.

I. A TALE OF THE NEW RELIGION.

II. THE SPIRITUALIST.

III. TWO LIVES.



A TALE OF THE NEW RELIGION.

A COLD imperious land whose barren slopes,
Fog-veiled and dark, lean to the rainy seas
Like bride unwilling to a gray-beard groom;
Whose shallow streams, from stony fountains fed
Under black groves of pine, through mossy vales
With many a granite cape or boulder vast
Wage ceaseless controversy; and whose breath
(Tempt not that breath for 'tis consumption's own)
From endless wastes of marshland wanders up
To poison the gray airs—a sombre land
Of shadow, and the eclipse of the warm light,
And things unnatural to the needs of men—
New England, self-complacent, fronts the world.
Yet though a land of barrenness and blight,
Where toilsome patience from the scanty mould

Wrings but a niggard substance, mite by mite,
Now hath the endless effort of her sons
Crowned her a queen among earth's provinces,
By wealth, and worth, and intellectual homes,
And memories that grow old. A wonder-land
It seems; a tidal line to mark the height
Of man's achievement in material things,
Where fate is adverse. Many a city lies
Along its sallow shores, or by the dams
That check its petulant rivers; and the gales,
That vex the hollow ocean to rough tones,
Waft thither argosies of unsummed wealth
From every quarter. But New England's eye,
Through which appears life's outward circumstance
And inner speculation—her prime gauge
Of witchcraft, jubilees, religion, life,
Is Boston. Thence goes forth a daily law
To all the shoal of cities round about,
To ancient villages curled up in sleep,
To multitudinous homesteads in the hills,
And to wayfarers born within her line,
Wide-wandering in all lands. Opinion, fashion,
Wear the clear Boston cut on countless backs:
And so for good—alas! how oft for evil,

Her emissaries line earth's thoroughfares,
Sowing in unfledged minds some pestilent thought
Subversive of good order, and with peace
Mouthed for a bait, strike at the holy creeds
And customs that enshrine what peace earth knows.
But Boston has no creed; or if she have,
'Tis simply "Agitate!" Her ruling caste,
Trained to disorganize, toil hard to shake
The rock-ribbed temple of things most divine,
And leave the living homeless, and the dead—
Nowhere.

There is a matron of this caste—
Janet Monell—wealthy, and somewhat known
For a light trick of verse, and for the rant
Of many a fierce unfeminine utterance,
When all forgetful of the privacy
That most becomes a woman, and the shame
Of down-cast eyes, and clear-browed modesty,
She mounts the platform, and with piercing voice
Inveighs against the staidness of the past,
Arraigns St. Paul for that he bade her be
No brawler, but a keeper at home, and grave
And quiet, and invites her motherly sex
To turn crusaders of the god Reform,

(The god whose other names are Restlessness,
Irreverence, Self-Will, Experiment),
In schemes humanitarian. Peace she loves—
She says so—and pathetically mourns
That earth knows little of it. But she finds
A sovereign panacea for all ills,
In woman's finer impulse, sympathy,
And adaptation to the use of suffrage;
"Suffrage will close the day of lust and war,
Repress ambition, change the moral tone
Of the whole world. No living thing is safe,
Except it vote; but voting cures all evils."
Thus does she prate.

But while, self-satisfied,
And conscious of pure wisdom, she harangues
A thronging rabble of her native town,
Perchance a woman of the Ægean isles,
Pale-faced and violet-eyed, sits on the rim
Of outmost benches, musing on the show,
And wondering if the creatures who applaud
Are as the speaker: but at times her eyes
Flash lightning fire. Ah, should their glances meet!

Who is this woman? She is young and fair,

With coils of golden ringlet, and a brow
Chaste as Diana's. But her face reveals
Sorrow and care; and anger may have drawn
A thread of loveliness from happy thoughts,
Leaving a raveled edge against the world.
What does she there in Boston? She was formed
For lavish sunlight, and the tender spell
Of mellow moons that wander in the blue,
High over orange groves. Winds perfumed sweet
With mingled odors of the sea and land,
Where sea and land are glorious, should lisp low
To fill her sense with sweetness, and assuage
Life's restlessness. Love should attend her—
Love in constant forms—mild eyes, delightful tones,
And ministering cares that make a spirit sweet.
Thus it once was. In all the Rhodian land,
Near Lindos, where the olive-wooded hills
Slope down to purple valleys, and begirt
A district studded thick with villages,
No face was sunnier with the lavish light
Of ripened maidenhood; no thrush more free,
Than Helena Pittakys. Her good sire,
A country gentleman of modest means,
Who loved his children, and well-knew the world

For a great battle-field, against whose toils
None can equip too well, in his own house
Had had them taught the old philology,
The many tongues now used in the Levant,
Music, and all the little common-place
Of Greek domestic life. So she was learned
Above most women; nay, above most men:
And when, among the citron glades, at eve
The village youth like nymphs and demigods
Went flitting through the Romaika, she,
Of all the comely, graceful sisterhood,
Most looked the revel-queen. Was it then strange
If Jules Monell, a shapely Boston youth
And Harvard Bachelor, wandering at will,
And sailing once to Lindos, sometime thought—
Spell-bound amid the dances—that he saw
No daughter of Pittakys, not a nymph,
But faultless Dian stepping once again
With slender gleaming foot the soundless turf
Moon-silvered in fair Rhodes? And was it strange
If in long rambles through that ancient land,
Hallowed by immemorial remains
Of mournful Hellas, or in pleasant rides
Across the hills to many a mouldering church

That fell to ruin in the knightly wars,
And from whose windy towers the nightingale,
Hid in dark hoods of ivy, pours the strain
Of her most subtle rapture—was it strange
His shadow flying on the bridle paths,
Or sitting motionless within an apse,
Seemed often knitted with a slighter shade?
You will not deem it strange: for youth when left
To natural impulse, sensitively thrills
To beauty; bows to worth; and most delights
In counterpart of color, nerve, and tone,
Least like its own.

And she? She could not say
But that she liked the Yankee;—liked him most,
Because he was unlike the Rhodian youth;
Less supple, whiter-skinned, and cooler in poise.
She prized the manly temper that is bred
Where men need not be servile—cringe and fawn
To barbarous foreign despots; and she thought
Jules had ripe worldly wisdom, and was ruled
By amiable impulse. So she grew,
Through sudden forward movements of the heart,
Even with his desire; and made her plight
To follow him across the western seas,
To Boston.

And anon they wed. Then, when,
For the last time Pittakys' tearful eyes
Looked on his daughter parting, brokenly
He spoke: "The way is long to that great land
Past the engulfing flood of angry seas,
Long, and with perilous chances wildly crossed.
I, in my life-time have not traveled far,
Though I have been in Athens once, and twice
Have voyaged to Smyrna. But, then I was young,
And youth will venture. Now being old,
I shall not try to reach you where you go—
To that far city, Boston. It is hard
To lose my children: I had hoped to see
Them near me, living: but God's ways are best.
Better that some of those who share my blood
Be manly freeman in a free bold land,
Than wear the Turk's accursed yoke in Rhodes!
So I dismiss you with the better heart,
Though I live lonelier to the end. In heaven
Are mansions: we may meet again: this is
My hope, my comfort. O my children,
Be true man and true woman: firmly hold
The faith delivered: be as I—christian
And orthodox: for this, will help you prove

Forgiving to each other: help you shun
The Evil Eye. Now God go with you both!"
And as they went, the old man humbly bowed
His righteous hoary head, as he had wont
Through all life's tangled maze of sun and sin—
Since paths are many and but one is straight,—
Turning aside upon the shining sand
To pray for them; for he was not ashamed
To be devout; nor thought it christian-like
To hide away, as 'twere a guilty thing,
Dependence deeply felt on Providence.
Then the loud-roaring funnels smote the heaven,
And the great populous steamer turned her prow
Out to the waste: Rhodes faded: Malta came;
Then Naples, Rome, Paris, and many a month
Of glorious England; 'till the honeymoon
Waning, a little satellite was seen—
The sweetest thing in that domestic sky.
Then they came home to Boston.

How the heart
Of Helena had flown across the sea,
By love-lore piloted, to meet and love
Her husband's mother! She had taught herself,
In long anticipation, not to dread

The strange far land where no tongue syllabled
The stately sweetness of her native speech,
Where every face and every custom wore
An unfamiliar guise that seemed a mask,
And where the skies, yea, even the doors of heaven
Were hung with cold gray palls of mouldy cloud,
From out whose covert sobbing wraiths of rain
Stalked down the shadowy hills; for she had found,
Ideally, a gentle motherly heart
With knowledge, apprehension, timely hints,
To guide her inexperience and make
Her moods discreet. Yet with concern that stirred
Emotion indefinable, she saw
That from the windy and perplexing west,
Where lay the root of all the days to come,
Some night-mare, poisonous-beaked, had fallen on
Jules,
And stolen away the gladness of his smile.
And when she sought its name, speaking of home,
Or friends expectant, whom each measured thro' b
Of the strong engines carried them more near,
(As in life's sea each heart-beat crowds the swimmer
Nearer an unknown company and shore,
Uncertain whether dark or bright,) she felt

His brief replies were empty of all joy.
Then, for she could but probe him, he confessed
His managing mother had her scheme for him,
That he had disappointed: but he mocked,
Making wry faces at the thing foregone,
And even at old Janet. So Helena
Thought lightly of the matter, and loved Jules
Still better, that he chose her as he did,
Despite some ground of other preference.
Yet wisely studious to please each friend
Of him she followed far across the world,
She decked herself with all the little art—
The feminine aptitude for sure effect—
That at the moment she could master. None
Knew better, how a first impression holds
On long appreciation. But when clothed
In simple modesty of fitting robes—
Her silken ringlets swaying from their loop
As amorous of the beauty of her cheek—
With what chagrin she felt Janet's keen eyes
Play like a fiery battery on her face,
Or storm from head to foot—a scrutiny
That ended with a look as plain as words
“I wish my son had never married you;”

And how within her chamber Helena
Wept bitter tears as week by week sped on,
And the breach widened, for opinions clashed,
And baleful words leaped up between the two,
Why need we tell at length? It is enough,
That one was old and cold, and proud and vain,
And discontent with God and man and woman,
Seeking herself to be an oracle
Named on all lips; the other, modest, meek,
And full of faith divine and human trust,
As every proper woman. How could these,
Thus diverse in their spiritual mould and aim,
Go hand in hand together?

So at last,

Dislike was common law: whereat Janet,
Knowing Jules' heart by knowledge of her own
For an unstable thing, that any wind
Might lift, and toss, and drift to dreamy coasts
If there were promise of a dainty joy,
Determined in her fierce and crooked will
To drive the spectre from her daily path. -
The scheme devised before the Rhodian sun
Had warmed the boy to silly sentiment,
And made him marplot, yet should do its work.

The world was free and wide; why should their
house

Be cumbered by a thing of lampless soul?

She pitied Helena; but, then, the world

Was not more wide than full of pithless mates

For pithless women. For herself she looked

Solely to public progress, family gain:

Jules, being her son, should stand front rank with
her

In liberal schemes to renovate the world.

So she would bait her cautious trap to take

The quarry, she had purposed in the past—

A pard-like belle of her own neighborhood—

Progressive, wealthy—being the orphan ward

Of kindred spirits. She must win, she thought,

Because her notice would be felt to do

Much honor; and the notions of the girl,

Formed in the ultraest school of modern thought,

Were finely radical.

The game began.

By many a wily ruse, whose hidden point

Caught, but not pricked, she made her devious way.

The days, in beauteous order wonder-full,

Brought Jules and the charmed girl to interviews,
That lengthened, growing fond. The bland Janet
Talked much to them of true affinities
In heart and mind and station; and she hinted,
That she could wish they two were fairly wed,
And bound afar to some delightful land
Beyond the impertinence of scandalous talk,
They were so fitted for a common fate.
Jules was not mated equally, she said:
His wife was foreign-mannered; and, yet worse,
Was superstitious as a bony Celt—
Pinning her faith to dogmas and sour priests,
And heedless of Free Thought, and lacking taste
For liberal progression. So 'twere well,
Could she be packed for Rhodes. And when the
 snares,
Woven with spider cunning, took the feet
That wandered willingly as they were led,
Janet grew bolder;—told the greedy pair
They were affinities, and she would help
Their hungering hearts to every natural bliss,
Breaking the bar between by speedy forms
Of legal process; and her theories
Feeding their amorous wishes, she prevailed.

But what, meanwhile, of Helena? Humbly,
As one who, tented while the rainy air
Blazes with ceaseless lightning, hides and strives
In studious common-place to calm the mind,
She held her ways apart, involved in cares
Of motherly duty; found it nobler far
To practice peace than loudly to profess it.
Yet would she seek by all her painful tact,
By all her feminine instinct, to appease
The keeper of the cage that was her world—
Janet Monell. Failing, she strove, but failed.
And when some tearful months had gone their way
Into the sorry heap of human loss,
She knew Janet might play a treacherous part.
And more she knew: she knew that Jules was like
His mother: that her hold upon his love
Had loosened; and the thought of it, sometimes,
Wrought at her neck as though a coiling snake
Made her breath faint. But roused at length to see
The greatness of her danger, piteously,
With sobs that shook the milky founts of life,
She fell upon her knees and begged of him
To take her from that prison: to provide
A safer shelter for her and her babe.

But Jules heard coldly; higgled when he spoke,
Or shamed her with "Pooh!" "Pooh!" Till as
she urged,

Growing intemperate, he sharply said
"This is my home and here I mean to stay.
If you would have a safer place, go seek it,
Nor stay for my sake." Then he strode away;
With hideous rush, with clang of door he strode,
And Helena left lone in bitter tears,
And blighting bitterness of heart, knew not
How deep a gulf was cloven. Straight he went,
With joy diffusing from his subtle heart
Triumphant attitude and tone and smile,
Like his who wins a battle in good cause,
And closeting with Janet, it was contrived
He should at once go westward, where remote
From old observance and the stable forms
Inherited from men of reverent mould,
Frontier communities, cursed by the rule
Of half-made-up projectors, planned their courts
To be the tools of vile caprice and lust;
Dispensing swift divorces for light fees,
And scarce a formal inquiry as to cause.
So night and day he whirled along the track

The round sun follows in the afternoons,
Past many a city, many a rural town
And farm-land home, that came, and fled, and came,
Till gleaming round a village in the woods
He saw the Wabash flowing to the south.
And there he paused and registered his name,
And so became a citizen, whose weal
The laws at every hazard must maintain.
No hour was lost: he pushed his right to crave
The arm of justice to stretch forth in power
Against the unwarned woman he would crush.
And scarcely had the paths where he was wont
To move in Boston missed his passing feet,
Ere Indiana courts had made decree,
Because the tempers of his wife and him
Were incompatible; and furthermore,
Because his wife had an abusive tongue,
Was a bad wife, bad mother to her babe,
Incompetent, and various lying counts
Of a like tenor, the aggrieved Monell
Should have relief of that most wicked wife,
And be divorced forever. And the court,
Not to leave any righteousness undone,
Further decreed, that since the foolish wife

Was most incompetent to train her child,
And was a vicious woman, Jules Monell
Should have sole custody thereof. Wherefore,
With a light heart—its only burden gone—
Jules hurried back to Boston; and Janet
With gay congratulation fluttered out
To meet him; and the girl of liberal mind
Came too; with red ripe lip to press she came,
Her dewy darkling eyes with tender thought
And praise and promise swimming. So all round,
They were a trio full of happiness.
Then ere the midnight shuddered in the streets,
With customary forms, but privately,
Jules took the woman for his other self,
To lock her fate in his. And the next day,
Leaving unheard the comments of the town—
The mirth or rage of various-minded men,
The pair embarked, and like two happy doves
That nestward fly, they sailed upon the seas
To bower in England. There they have a home
Of luxury and content. But they went not,
Sailing the seas to that fair English isle,
Alone: with them a nurse went too, who bore,
From the fond breast where it had smiled and slept

Since its first hour, the child of Helena
Pittakys.

Then the lingering death in life,
The slow disease of spirit that suspense
But aggravates, came to its tedious end
In Helena. To her, when Jules had flown
Rattling to westward for the knife of law
That cut their lives in twain, had come a note
Asserting business—western courts and costs—
An urgent case. But not a garrulous word
Of sympathy, such as from mated hearts
Stream up like bubbles from the depths of springs
In endless flock, lay on the pencilled page.
'Twas a mere note of information; curt,
As it were drafted by an agency;
And gazing tearfully along its lines,
She whispered “Jules went from me in his wrath;
With unkind words: he now is never kind.”
But suddenly Janet to help the plot
To an unquestioned issue, and lay bare
Suspensions that might take obstructive form,
Grew blander; talked of Rhodes; and sometimes
asked,
If Helena would like again to see

The Rhodian mountains and the olive woods,
The pomegranate hedges, violet citron blooms,
Slopes of green orange orchard, and the sea
That moans bereft of its imperial past,
And her light-hearted friends of other days?
Then the young wife, with startled side-long glance,
Would seek the guile she felt but could not find
In her tormenter; and she wished herself
In Rhodes, or any other region that the sun,
Rising or setting, tempers to man's need,
So she might have her husband and her babe,
And never see that serpent face again.
She felt the plots about her; felt her feet
Snared in a mesh whose breadth she could not
find.

Yet what could she? Where was her strength to
strive?

What use to cry?

One day she missed her babe;
And all the house in all its hollows rang
With long and shrilly clamors of the search.
Janet was out, nor came for many an hour:
And Helena moved too and fro in tears,
Low-whispering in her bruised and fearful heart

“What should I do without my babe? Who else
In this land loves me? What could comfort me
Should I lose him?” And then an intense prayer,
Against such loss, stole to the Silent Ear
That hears the inarticulate wail of thought
And treasures up the grief of humbled hearts.
But as the hours trailed on Janet came back:
And eagerly to her then, Helena:
“Where is the babe?” Whereat, the bland Janet
Told how her son had found another mate,
Of more compatible moods; more suitable,
In the affinities of flesh and spirit; one
Of his first playmates, whom, a child, he loved,
And who loved him despite the escapade
Of youthful folly in Rhodes: that they were wed—
Irrevocably wed; and now were far—
Swift-steaming o’er the barren wastes of sea
To dwell amid the glory of old lands,
And might perhaps come back to this no more.
And Helena blanched white and glanced aside,
And with low voice, and humbly, asked again
“Where is my babe?” and then Janet went on
With all the story of the western courts,
And said, “The child sails too—he sails—is safe;

And you, be sure, will soon be glad of that,
For you are unencumbered in the world,
And where your inclination leads can go."

There are some bitter hours in every life:
But in some lives the hours of bitterness
Seem drugged with venom that no heart can bear:
When death or madness is the obvious goal
To which the helpless spirit rushes down,
Unless withheld by potent faith or rage.
And sudden rage rose up in Helena
To save her from despair; and with high look
And tearless, she cried out "I am the sport
Of monsters: this is devil-work! Monell—
Woman—if such a fleshly thing you are—
If not a wandering fiend unchained from hell,
Who prate of peace and the humanities,
And seek to be a pilot of 'Reform,'
But put the dagger to an innocent heart,
If feeble, God shall judge between us two.
I curse you! Take my curse!—the curse of one
Perhaps of no importance in the world,
But yet the meanest, humblest thing that lives
Has rights, God-given feeling, hopes and fears,

And no one may elude heaven's wrath who dares
To outrage them."

"Dote not on heaven's wrath!"

Janet said softly: "Hell is out of date,
My child: we live in better times. But look you!
Our ways diverge, at once: the door stands wide—
Your path lies through it."

And then Helena:

"I know my path, and I will take it too.
But, woman, I shall not make glad your heart
By fleeing to some filthy den of shame
For refuge. You shall not hereafter say
'She was a vile unworthy thing, and we,
To save from taint the fair name of our house,
Were forced to cast her off.' You shall not speak
Such words of me. Beware of lying words!"
Thereat she turned and sought her chamber; caught
With hurrying hand her modest small effects,
Threw out the gifts her faithless husband gave,
Retained mementos of the child whose life
Had grown from hers; and fell upon her bed
In one faint agony of tears and prayer.
But she meant not to linger; so uprose,
And tottering through the room made haste to clear

Her painful eyes of their hot brimming floods,
And while composure struggled with her grief,
Drew down her veil and softly stole away.
But as she went, rounding a mighty church,
That stood like a great fort of faith against
The liberal hordes of Boston, in the snow—
For it was winter—The Nativity—
She paused a moment while, 'mid organ peals
And thunderous sound of voices, broke and rolled
The Angel's song athwart the chilly street—
“Peace on Earth, Good Will to Men.” Up to
heaven

She looked—the clouded Boston heaven : but there,
Ev'n as she gazed the black clouds drew apart,
And from the soft and holy blue beyond
A gleam of happy sunshine touched her face.
Heaven did not mock her sorrow ; heaven she
knew

Had no part in a useless misery.
And she remembered what her father taught
In other days, when speaking of the crown
They win to wear in light who suffer most,
And through much suffering are purified,
That earth, despite its bustling hollow schemes

And sham pretension, gives no real peace,
And has no peace to give: that promised peace—
The “Peace on Earth,”—is of the ransomed soul;
An inward peace, though strife howl like a storm
Over the hills and valleys of the world.
She listened: and the song fell soothingly—
Fell like a message sent direct to her—
Bidding her trust; bidding her faith be strong;
Bidding her find her comfort in the power
Of Him who took upon Himself the load
Of all whose weakness drives them to the cross.
She went her way supported; tearfully,
Confessing to herself that God is good;
And feeling a low whisper in her hope,
That He in time will make the crooked straight,
Working from grievous discipline, a frame
To make the endless rest more sweet. She told
Her tale; found friends; and earns her daily bread,
Teaching the tongue of Italy, music,
And feminine sleights. And she preserves intact
Her father’s simple faith.

But when Janet
Is clamoring to a crowd about Reform,
Peace, Suffrage, Temperance, and novelties

Unnamed, seeking to drag moralities
Into the foul political pool, perchance
Sad Helena may sometime pause to hear;
May wonder in her soul if all the crowd
Applausive of the liberal schemes and modes
Are at the core diseased as she who rants;
And turn away with sick and wounded spirit,
That in a world where good might well be done,
The holiest words fly through uncleanest lips;
That creatures like Janet, devoid of faith,
Humility, and justice, strive to be
The inspiration of Reform.

Think you!

What sort of thing is that Reform whose root
Is struck in Boston; and whose advocates
Are like Janet Monell? Ask Helena,
Widowed and childless, what she thinks of it?
And if she yet has joined the liberal cause?

NOTE.—During the last days of his life, Mr. John Stuart Mill had a consultation with Mr. John Morley, relative to the establishment of the New Religion. The New Religion has for its nominal author M. Auguste Comte, who styled himself “*Fondateur de la Religion de l’Humanité*.” It is, however, probable that Comte owed much of his system to a study of the works of Mill.

It is almost superfluous to say, that a group of men in and around Boston, and other groups, or isolated instances, in various parts of America, have adopted, and assiduously sought to extend, the New Religion, in all its features. The foregoing tale, which is but a child of the brain, is, I think, very properly located in that one city of the world where the New Religion is most potential. I proffer it as my protest against a mutinous individualism, and the exceeding and scandalous facility of divorce.

THE SPIRITUALIST.

I.

ONCE, in a laughing afternoon,
Down-looking from the heaven of June,
A pale lost-angel, deathly fair,
With tarnished wing slow-beat the air
Above a valley in this land.
Far off, she saw a village stand,
And heard a silvery clang of bells
Sweet as the music of sea-shells
That breathe forever of the sea:
And wondering what thereat might be,
She poised her wing that way to sail.
But then it was, that in the vale
Just underneath her, she espied,
Where woodland alleys, dim but wide,

Were cool with overspreading shade,
A youthful couple—man and maid—
Together sweetly wandering.
Wherefore the angel furred her wing,
And breaking from the mystic spells
Of the bewildered happy bells,
She stepped adown the shadowy air,
And stood beside that fondling pair.
Thenceforth she shared their loitering walk,
And weighed the motives of their talk :
Thenceforth admired the modest mien,
The spotless thought, and hope serene,
Of a sweet saint that seemed imbued
With every grace of maidenhood.
And much she envied in her soul
One so complete, so soundly whole,
And capable for love or bliss.
“I, too, was once as fair as this ;
But shall not be again,” she sighed.
And for a moment, dreamy-eyed
She stood absorbed, while far away
In heavenly heights she seemed to stray,
Of crime, and want, and canker free,
And happy as we mortals be,

When, his long winter journey done,
Back to the north returns the sun,
And lifts the curtain of the snows,
And brings the violet and the rose,
And lets the mirth of summer in.
But straightway she recalled her sin;
And fierce with gathering wrath she grew,
As, o'er her robes her glances flew
And marked each darker growing stain:
"Would that all things might share this pain,"
She said, "nor any fairer be,
To contrast with my misery.
If heaven to me denies its rest,
I would that nothing might be blest."
Thereat upon the pair she turned
For mischief; and her hot eyes burned
With baleful and envenomed light,
Like some dread meteor that at night
Glares in the welkin; and she grasped
An arm round each unfelt, and clasped
Her thought to theirs, that all might run
Like many colors blent in one,
And that one hers. Yet ere she wrought
Defilement of their blameless thought,

A flashing wing beside her stirred,
A once familiar voice she heard,
And to her shoulder came a hand.
“Stand forth!” the voice said; with command
That on her guilty spirit fell
Resistless, as the ocean swell,
That drifts a shattered, helmless bark
On some far path, whose end is dark,
And she recoiled and faced her foe.
Whiter his robes than new-laid snow
By full-moons silvered; and his wings
Were jeweled with strange opal things,
Eye-like; and on his kingly head
A golden wreath was garlanded,
Whose knots, amid the beamy curls,
Were studded with resplendent pearls.
Stern was he: in his flashing eye
Rebuke and threatening seemed to lie,
The prophecy of warlike deeds.
Yet, as from night to night succeeds
The crescent’s growth, till heaven is clear
Of darkness, and the hills appear
Composed and solemn, vast and still,
Some milder impulse orbed his will

As crowding moments flitted by,
Till pity filled his glittering eye,
And gentleness his face o'erspread.
“And thus, we meet again,” he said,
With sweet low voice: “O, sad to see
Thee garmented in misery,
And outcast in this deadly earth:
Thee, who, a brief while ere the birth
Of mortals into fateful time,
Wert lovely as that heavenly clime
Where we were heirs of noble things.”
But with a scowl of scorn, her wings
The fiend uplift, and fled away,
Flecking the golden flame of day,
As she would leave that vale remote.
And long as he could see her float
In the rich vapors of the sky,
The Seraph, with observant eye,
Pursued her lessening shape. At last,
The cloak of hills was round her cast,
And with his charge he walked the wood,
Or like a champion warrior stood,
When doleful creatures glimmered nigh.

But when, no longer she need ply
Her laboring van to stay the look
Of gentle ruth she could not brook,
The fierce lost-angel, backward turning,
With jealous, keen impatience burning,
By zigzag path, and stealthy flit,
And brief concealment, soon alit
Within the wood, where lingered long
The youth and maid and guardian strong.
There, hiding like a scaly thing,
That noiseless slides where shadows fling
Their blackest mask, she viewed unseen
Him she had loved, ere yet unclean,
Ere tempted yet she fell from heaven
Infuriate and unforgiven.
For in that elemental time
Of trial, ere souls reach full prime,
When life and death hang in the scale,
And whether this, or that, prevail,
Is ever fixed by loyalty
To rule, and spiritual purity,
Her fate with his had intertwined
Like happy fancies in the mind.

No fairer land the wide heaven knew
Than that where their contentment grew:
A cool bright land of sun and dews,
And gentle homes and loves. To use
That high estate with zealous care—
Through brief probation to beware,
Was all God ever asked of her.
But once through heaven bold Lucifer
Defective, stumbling for a flaw
In the just measure of God's law,
Spread fierce rebellion through all spheres,
And wrought a work of hate and tears
No potent future can undo.
And she, corrupted through and through
By one low-fallen, who claimed to be
Her spiritual affinity,
Met him in lust, and fled afar,
And fought, and lost, in that high war,
When heaven was cleansed of guilty souls.
And hiding here, in dens and holes
That reek with odors damp and chill,
Or in the fouler tombs they fill
Whose lives were given to evil deeds,
She found her place. At times her needs

Imperious, drove her forth to men—
To harass, tempt, destroy; and then
Rejoice that heaven was yet defied.
But since the hour, when from his side,
A sullied thing she fled away
Into the loathsome life, that lay
Before her to the end of days,
Then first her painful, eager gaze
Reviewed the consort of her youth.
It was an humbling sight, in sooth,
For he, like her, had changed. But, oh!
His was no change of overthrow,
Of ruin, such as dwelt in her.
But lovely had grown lovelier,
And strong more strong. And well she knew,
By the fair jewel gleaming through
His bright brown curls, he had been crowned
The ruler of some realm renowned:
Yet left its state, like God's true knight,
Crusading in the earth, to fight
Man's battle with a ghostly foe.
With them he kept, she saw him go,
Shepherding them; and through her breast
Stole admiration; then unrest

That flamed to hate; for memory came
To tell her she had chosen shame,
And was an outcast unforgiven,
While he had place and peace in heaven.
Soon set the sun; and evening's sigh,
Unutterably lone went by:
To mortals, it was but a breath;
To her, it rudely whispered "Death;"
Shuddering, she rose, she glanced around,
There came no other sigh or sound.
The dark leaves lay as still as stone,
She stood beneath them all alone,
Her will o'ermastered by dismay:
She moaned, and, moaning, fled away.

II.

When Autumn comes, and fair and still,
The mild day lies on vale and hill,
And sounds are soft and far away—
A subtle influence of decay—
A sympathy with nature steals
Into the heart that finely feels.

Heaven to our earth then seems so nigh,
We scarce can deem it hard to die;
To go from the temptations strong,
That follow fast and follow long;
To find from evil men release;
To settle to high ways of peace,
In the due place that waits our need.
Thus many deem; thus, she, indeed,
The villager, whom we have seen
Love-wandering when the woods were green.
She had been wed; had vowed her life
To woman's noblest office—wife;
Had thrilled with hopes maternal: found
Her home a not too narrow bound,
To gain the reverence all men give
True wives, who for their wifehood live.
Weeks were as years; and autumn came,
Painting the woodlands as with flame,
And mellowing all the prairie splendor;
And while the world sat still and tender,
Like friends at parting, who conceal
Half the deep sorrow that they feel,
Hidden from all but spiritual sense,
One came for her—she knew from whence;

She felt his presence from the first.
God made her so for heaven athirst,
She met his coming without fear.
But when the parting hour drew near,
As, through her window, with calm eye,
She searched the long, low arch of sky,
The faded forests and the hills,
Loving the ripeness that so fills
With spiritual inspiration sober,
The lingering pathos of October,
Her mournful, heart-worn husband sought
To know, if humanly she thought
Of death, and where and what its sting.
Then she: "Death is no fearful thing—
Not that: its sting is weak; and yet,
I feel a conscious, clear regret,
Perhaps; because, when I am dead,
And on my grave some months have shed
Sun-gleam and shadow, leaf and snow,
Less and less moved you'll feel to go
And linger near my ashes cold,
That heavy, mouldering trances hold,
Though still life's principle they keep.
To be forgotten! I might weep

For that; but, wherefore? There will come
White angels to my speechless tomb,
Guarding its sweet, unmeasured rest,
Like sunbeams that for aye invest
The sod where hid the frost-bound flowers.
Dear to the pure, invisible powers,
Who stream, like motes the light gives birth,
Down through the darkness of the earth,
Are all the graves that hold the seed
Unfountained Love with life shall feed.
God gives our sleep, and *in* our sleep.”
She spoke in faith; her faith was deep
And calm, as lakes that conscious lie
Under heaven’s blue, unclouded eye,
Far-sheltered by bright mountains round.

Then soon again there was the sound
Of a bell moving in its height,
Whose strokes made tremulous the light,
That like a waning glory, lay
Over the vale. From far away,
That angel fated unto death,
Sinful, and trembling at a breath

Prophetic, who had whilom fled,
To hide her misery with the dead
Untended by good angels' care,
Returning, paused awhile in air,
And listened to the solemn toll
That knells the passing of a soul.
Then she came near and saw the clay,
Lovely and holy in decay:
A prostrate temple, dark and cold,
And yet a thing of perfect mould,
Upon whose brow was fixed the seal
No desolation can conceal—
The cross baptismal faintly glowing.
And, all that ruin overflowing,
To her clear eye, love lay like light,
And death was but a sleep of night,
So deep that dreams had gone away.

But when the body mouldering lay
Entombed, and in the first distress,
The faintness and the loneliness
Of blasted hope, the husband came,
Feeding by one low mound the flame

Of his soul's yearning, and would call
On her who heard him not at all,
And strain his sight to reach the zone
Where the stars sit, each on its throne,
Lighting the paths of heaven, if there,
Haply, some gleam to his despair
Might bring relief up-beckoning him,
The fiend, left tempter, shook a dim
But glancing starlight ray, whose motion,
Like tides moon-swayed in the mid-ocean,
Told of an impulse from above.
Seeing, he trembled; but of love
Came strength; for he at once grew clear—
Blindest when danger was most near—
That his wife-angel had been sent
From Paradise for his content.
And then he felt a soft revealing—
A subtle influence, that concealing
Motion, and form, and that fond measure
Of long caress that is love's pleasure,
Seemed faint, as if in journeying far,
Like the weak beams of some pale star
That die where first they chance to rest,
She must expire upon his breast.

He wept for very thankfulness,
And gently moved as to caress
The invisible spirit folded there.
But more elusive than the air,
Or than dream-people of the night,
That flit around us till daylight
Dissolves our sleep, she seemed to be.
Her form he could not find, nor see
Her raiment: but his flesh grew cold,
And faint his breath, as if the fold
Of a fierce serpent strangled him.
Then full of misery, his dim,
Blood-shotten eyes he raised, and called
On Christ; and as she were appalled,
The spirit on his bosom lying
Stirred, left him, and he heard a sighing
As of far cedars, or the shore,
Sand-paved, a river washes o'er.
He begged of Christ to give her back;
His prayers were useless to his lack;
He only heard the wind's low tune;
He only saw the pale, still moon;
He only felt a new despair,
Deep as the grave beneath him there.

And other nights thus came and went,
Like clouds where wind and fire are blent,
Till, weakened in his natural force,
The weary man forsook the source
Whence love and light and strength descend
In their own channels without end,
As down the clefts of mountains flow
To irrigate the lands below
The streams of ever-living springs.
And he went probing those wild things
The Medium proffers; and he found
Strange fascination in the sound
Of table-raps, and in the gleam
Of spectral arms, or in a stream
Of haloed tresses, faintly showing,
Or wafts of music—coming, going,
Like thoughts of souls that know unrest.

And while these matters in his breast
From day to day the man revolved,
And like a riddle unresolved,
It baffled him to find a clue,
The demon closer to him drew,

And fed his brain with fantasies
Of all impure and hollow bliss,
And notions that at law rebelled.
But not by these could he be quelled:
His soul was yet too strong for vice,
Voluptuous dreams and artifice,
And a frail woman's sad undoing.
His will set not to amorous wooing—
To touches that bring only tears,
To eye-light bold and sharp as spears—
The guileful craft of hypocrites.
'Mid lures of lust he kept his wits;
And patient as the astronomer
Who notes the influence of a star
Unknown, in some dim tract of sky,
And seeks it with unwearying eye,
Till it is found, where faint it lies,
He toiled amid the mysteries
Upon the border-land of Time,
And strove to know the life sublime
Of spiritual being: thinking thus
To make his wan days glorious—
Soul-mated to the fellow soul
Of his beloved. Nor far the goal

Seemed to his wish. For he had heard
In darkness, a low voice that stirred
His pulses to a swifter sweep,
As, when winds murmur, the blue deep
Throbs into waves. Once there had risen
At midnight, as from some deep prison,
A pale, sad face, with downcast eyes
And luminous hair: her mouth to sighs
Seemed fitted; and he wept to see
That such endurance e'er must be.
But not in that pain-haunted face,
Nor in that lonely voice, was trace
Of the blest spirit that he sought.
Hers was a face whose happy thought
Is of the essence of the being:
Whose voice is music well-agreeing
With the sweet airs that fill the dome
Of the blithe star that is her home—
Where pain is not, nor thought of pain.
Yet ever as he strove to gain
Some sound or sight to cheer his sense
With her celestial innocence,
And felt as if she lingered near—
Lingered—ah, why? but must appear

A moment later; if he called
On Christ for filmless eyes, appalled
The hidden presence seemed to be,
And left him full of misery,
In darkness: and the Mediums said,
“Christ was a man; and Christ is dead.
In His own circle He inherits
Some place peculiar to his merits.
But wherefore more? All heaven is great,
And none upon another wait;
For all in glory are the same.”
He paused: but with the frenzied flame
Of expectation unfulfilled,
He burned; and he was yet self-willed—
Untamed to the firm reign of law,
And heedless how old doctrines draw
The trustful like flower-woven chains.

So once at midnight, when the strains
Of a faint music filled his room,
And there came forth amid the gloom
A white small hand, and then its arm,
Rounded, and beautiful. and warm,

But nothing more; and even this,
Shining a moment, the abyss
Of darkness swallowed, and the flow
Of low, lone music sunk more low
And died in silence, the swift chill
Of a great hope made bold his will,
And he cried out "If thou be she,
O spirit, whom I seek, to me
Why cruel in such strange revealing—
Seen in some part, but more concealing?
Thy presence is but meaningless."
Thereat he felt a faint caress,
And a voice whispered in his ear,
Low as the distant sounds we hear
When slowly dies the golden day:
"Drive me no more, O love, away;
But fit thy spirit unto mine,
And let me lead thee: I am thine.
But thou must trust me only: follow,
As to the sun goes e'er the swallow,
Nor linger when I bid thee speed."
And he, "Beloved, thou art my need—
My utmost need. Be thou to me
Pilot of hope, and love, and will.

I will not stir except thou fill.
My spirit with thy heavenly light :
Only stand forth ; shake off the night
That veils thy presence : let me see
Just what thou art, that I may be
"Relieved of human doubt and dread."
And then the angel softly said :
"Come forth, O love, the night is warm,
And since 'tis very dark, my arm
Shall clasp and guide thee while we stray.
I have a house not far away—
A palace fair, majestic,
Where many fountains, musical,
Play in their own unwasting light.
Not here may I reward thy sight :
But by those fountains you shall see
More than your subtlest dream in me :
And you shall lead me at your leisure,
And in my palace find such pleasure
As not a mortal yet has found."
Thereat her arm begirt him round,
Soft but yet mighty ; and they went
Forth, underneath the heaven-broad tent

The winds had built of gloomy cloud.
No star could pierce that awful shroud,
To throw its glimmer on their way,
That down nor path nor alley lay,
But through the open prairie wound.
The world in slumber made no sound.
The winds were low, and almost still:
And then the man grew weak of will,
And all his courage seemed to fail.
Whereat, the spirit: "Love, you quail
Just at the moment of delight.
Will you go back with bliss in sight?
A little further is my door—
Open to-night, or nevermore.
O trust me, wholly: be more strong:
Our love can never lead us wrong.
Never was time so apt as this."
And then he felt what seemed a kiss,
Or rose-leaf fluttering on his cheek.
And he went onward faint and weak,
Yet with a purpose to attain
All that an utter trust could gain.
Ere long his ear caught, from below
As in a vale, the plash and flow

Of waters as from fountains welling ;
And there was low, weird music swelling
Upon the stilly perfumed air.
Far-off lights glimmered here and there,
Rayless, yet beautiful and clear.
And then his guide breathed at his ear,
“Haste: for we near the happy bound
Where more than life or death are found ;
Where love that even the numb, cold grave
May not destroy, and not enslave ;
Where bliss no man that lives on earth
Has ever compassed—lacking worth—
Bliss only known in Paradise,
And hidden by divine device
From things impure, shall soon be ours.”

They quickened pace: hope lent new powers
To strength. And, lo! a dome more fair
Than opiate vision soared in air,
Wide-flanked by fountained lawns and woods,
Where small birds gleamed in multitudes—
Embodiments of all delight.
Around them was no longer night;

But a soft radiance such as lies,
Just after sunset, in the skies
Over the sunken sun. It came
Not from an elemental flame,
That burns and darkens with the hours.
Its fountain was the spiritual powers
Of being, and was cloudless ever,
As looks of tenderness, that never
Perish from memory. A vision
Utterly tranquil and Elysian
It stood, mocking all earth-born art.
The man felt gleeful in his heart,
As, after thunder storms are spent
And fear is gone, comes merriment—
The swift recoil from thought o'er-strained.
And onward moving, he had gained
The landing to an easy stair,
And raised his eager foot in air
To enter and make sure of bliss,
When, lo! with shuddering surge and hiss,
An inky chasm yawned, like hell,
The palace vanished, and he fell
Down a sheer height to where below
Tall cedars fringe a river's flow,

And many a boulder flecks the sand.
Falling, he felt the powerful hand
Down-dragging, that had been his guide;
And there was laughter at his side,
Derisive of his pangs. He threw
A passionate thought to Christ, that flew
As it was sent: then bruised and torn,
And senseless as the dead we mourn,
He lay beneath a cedarn pall,
And night, and silence, covered all.

III.

O holy bells, of Sabbath time!
O, voices of that golden clime,
Where childhood is forever playing,
And youth, forever, is a-Maying,
And age is never weak and cold,
For all are young, though all grow old;
Sweetest are ye of all the sounds
That float or flow in mortal bounds;
That float, or flow, or chime, or roar;
Or sink, or swell, or run before,

Or follow after human fate,
To gladden, warn, and consecrate.
But sweetest far, when sins are past,
And pale repentance finds, at last,
God's help to claim His covenant grace,
Transmitted in the holy place
Where prayer is said, and blessing given—
Free pardon in the name of heaven.
O, well I know, one holy day,
When hill and valley far away,
Despite earth's livery of crime,
Were lovely in the April time,
How sweetly on a sick ear fell
The measures of the Sabbath bell.

Listening, he wept: for death and life
Had waged for him an equal strife,
Ere life had conquered. He had lain
Easy and patient after pain,
While Strength and Health, twin-angels, came
To knit their virtues in his frame,
And give him back his natural ways.
Thus lying, grief, for faithless days,

Fiend-haunted to that headlong leap,
Wrought like a torrent swollen and deep,
That, after rains and yielding snows,
Resistless through the country goes,
Refining, in its mighty flood,
The filth of city, glebe, and wood.
Loathed was his sin: his sense of shame,
Of utter vileness, burned like flame:
And when repentance had subdued,
He wept for honest gratitude.
Then, hearing the benignant bells,
Whose harmony of heaven foretells,
He rose, and through the sunshine fair
Was helped to gain the house of prayer.
He found the altar draped in white,
Paten and chalice gleaming bright,
And heard the priest when prayers were said,
Speak of the honored, holy dead,
Saying: "Our loved ones are not lost;
But yet they are no longer tost
By earthly motives. They are clear
Of all the influences felt here.
They are not troubled by our sin—
Know not what is, or might have been.

They are at peace and wait for us.
Their life is wholly glorious.
But we come near them when we take
The covenant symbols: for we make
Ourselves, repentant, one with Him
Who, throned upon the Cherubim,
Is one with all the holy dead.
This bread and wine, of Christ, our Head,
Is representative. Draw near
With humble confidence and fear,
And have forgiveness of your sin,
And let the life of heaven begin.”
Thankful, the weary penitent
Moved to the chancel rail, and bent
In earnest prayer. The bread and wine—
Heaven’s visible covenant seal and sign—
Sign of forgiveness of the past,
Seal of adoption, first and last,
Were taken while he pledged good faith
And honest service ev’n to death.
Then he arose and went his way,
And lives the pilgrim life each day—
Slow moving to the golden shore.
So, through mild airs, or storms that roar,

A noble steamer onward rides
Across a waste of trackless tides,
Seeking the land where she would be—
Past all the peril of the sea.

TWO LIVES.

ONE who was born into this restless time
With sympathy for movement, yet with thought
That gladliest anchored nearer to the dawn,
In the vast stillness of antique repose,
McPherson, poet, weary of the crowd,
And weary, too, of wandering through the world,
On a far sloping hillside, whose cool feet
Bright lake-nymphs laved with peaceful ministries,
Had built his home. It was a full-eyed spot—
Rich in æsthetic stimulation—fraught
With every possible freak of sun and shade;
And there he gathered costly books and pictures,
Formed high ideals, studied much, dreamed more,
And grew within himself an isolation
Forever further from the common life.
Yet was the manhood of his nature kingly;

And oft he felt the life should not be lone,
That aims at perfect methods. So his eye
Went wandering through the immediate neighbor-
hood,

In lengthened quest among its many maids,
Measuring each charm of each, and each defect,
Or actual, or supposed. But none he found
Sweet as his phantom fancies: none he asked
To share his thought, his lucre, and his life.
But deeper sinking in himself, he grew
Closer to books and art, and longer lingered
To watch the tipsy shadows reel and dip
Across the hilly amphitheatre,
Or sail the happy lake. And thus, perchance,
His days had passed unploughed by incident
Of tripping-smooth or rudely-rough romance,
And he had withered at the roots of soul,
And died unwept of any clinging thing
That rose on him up higher into light,
But for a concert. Wandering through the land,
By advertisement heralded, from town
To town came the Dulce Family—a troupe
Of “celebrated artistes;” everyone
A “famous” singer; and a night they gave

The quiet villagers, in whose fair vale
McPherson dwelt. Then he, because his soul
Was set to music, as the key that waits
The skillful finger, and more passion found
In modulated harmonies than one
With nature less ideal, when the hour
Summoned attendance, in a crowded hall,
Where dashing forward like the flow of tides,
Impatience clamored madly 'gainst the stage,
Found himself waiting the "stupendous scheme"
Of the Dulce Company.

Anon, was seen

A side door opening inward. Then outswung,
With ponderous waddle, a three-hundred-pounder—
Music in avoirdupois: and this was Dulce.
In all professional travel, his the name
Borne by the troupe; a troupe, of men a pair
And women twain; who, gliding near their chief,
Stood up in file, and sung their overture.

But when the overture had had applause,
And other songs had come and gone like lives
Too lovely to last long in this wild world,
She, of the women-singers that was younger,

Stepped forth alone, and gave to melody
Impersonation perfect. For her mien,
Unmarred of weakness, showed so virginal pure
Through lithe and gracious action, and her art
So matched her theme, that down the roaring
hall

Applause flew under every hand and foot,
Then died antiphonally. Not a nerve
But thrilled to that brief song: but most of all,
McPherson felt its influence, as a cloud
Wind-rocks through heaven: his was a poet-soul.

And when the concert ended, and the crowd
Dispersed adown the labyrinth of the streets,
He saw the moon low-lying on her back,
And wan and watery on the western heights.
Then a damp sigh crept to him out of space—
Half felt to be prophetic. Home at last,
He dreamed all night of songs he could not learn;
Of smiles that faded as they turned on him;
Of waning moons dissolving into tears;
Of a girl babe its dying mother left,
With pleading look to him.

Musing, next morn,
Of portents and of dreams, awhile he paused,
Irresolute in projects many hued,
And fearful he might play the feverish fool
Should he go chasing in the sight of men
A strolling singer with a pretty face;
Yet bent to see if fate might hold in store
Some better thing than emptiness of heart,
He shuffled townwards, doubtfully and slow,
And found the fair Christine.

And, if, at night
He felt the ineffable spell of a pure art
And unflecked maiden modesty, by day
He knew a woman formed for just esteem,
Ripe for unselfish ministries, well-taught,
And thoughtful in experience of a life
That taxed the nerve, resistance, energy,
Of her whole nature. So he lingered long;
And well the maid discerned his secret thought,
And knew she had impressed him.

But that Dulce,
Who did the heavy bass, and felt his heart
Go quicker in the presence of Christine,
Went shambling in and out through all the morn,

Disordered. Love, he saw, might prove to be
An easy thing for two, but rude for three;
And thenceforth he felt hateful to the poet,
And never would endure to read his rhymes.

But perfumed hours exhaled, and with them passed
The music-making Dulces, everyone—
Lost in the abysmal maelstrom of the world.
And now McPherson, with fresh food for dreams—
Unfolding from Christine as flower from seed—
Made from thick fancies an ideal shape
Of perfect and enamoring womanhood,
Such as with fleshly foot ne'er lit on earth.
And through the calm, swift autumn days, he ranged
The hilly country, carving out thought's idol—
To daintier symmetry still pruning it,
As one might touch a statue here and there,
Guided by taste grown nicer in the study—
Till leaves had fallen, and November gales,
Whistling their dreary dirges in his ear,
Drove him for shelter to his lonely house.
There, idling once among the daily news,
His eye caught fast upon a meagre line,
That barely told the Dulces' whereabouts

In cities on the seaboard. Then the Bard,
Mindful of her, who, of all womankind
Sat highest in the reverence of his heart,
And gave his life the fable of his dreams,
Seized pen, and bodied forth a moody song,
That spoke, yet did not speak, his secret thought:

Christine, Christine, the summer is over,
The leaves have fallen, the birds have flown;
And naught is abroad in meadow, or grove, or
Flowerless garden, save winds that moan.
And thou—hast thou left me forever, sweet rover?

Farther and farther away you wander,
Yonder past cities that sit by the sea.
Time that is precious, alas! will you squander,
Time, were you here, would be precious to me?
Ah, that of quiet, Christine, you were fonder!

Life is too barren for lovers to trifle;
Hearts that are earnest, O how can they range?
Think not all gardens have nectar to rifle—
Some grow but poisons; beware then of change!
Who will be gay shall with tears get each eye full.

What seems most splendid is foul as Gehenna.

Circles that fashion rules, culture will shun.

She is but simple, who flushes, for many,

Charms most complete in the keeping of one.

Sweet, be not dazed by the clink of the penny.

Who are the mice you would find in your meshes?

Who the fresh victims would drown in your
moat?

Who stand entranced, when a burst of song stretches

The blonde fair curves of your marvellous throat?

Whence is the praise, your proud fancy refreshes?

Praise, e'en if heartfelt, defers not a wrinkle.

Days fly apace, and the fire of the eye

Wanes unperceived, like the sweet stars that twinkle

Bright through the night, but in twilight must
die.

Soon threads of silver your fair head will sprinkle.

Then shall you say "Ah, where is a cover

Safe from the ills that encompass the old?

Where is the fond faithful breast of my lover;

Lips that are kind, and embraces that hold?—

O for a strong arm about me to hover!"

Voices the sweetest end ever in quavers;
Time that is ruthless, kills all but the heart.
On, as he comes, the toughest will wavers,
Trembles a moment, and yields to its part.
But love is immortal: love, only, heaven favors.

List to the winds whose delicate fingers
Lift the loose curls of your opulent head:
These are the music that evermore lingers;
Voices undying from lips that are dead—
List; do you hear them, the mournful low singers?

These are the voices, that love never blesses—
Notes, that are strung on a gamut of pain;
These are their voices who knew no caresses;
Loved not, and knew not what love has to gain—
Hear them: how lonely they sigh in your tresses!

Sweet, would'st be like them—a hollow sad murmur,
Vexing the future with tones without cheer?
Flit then forever, and follow the summer;
Dazzle by beauty, and ravish the ear!—
Welcome the worship of every new comer!

Welcome—how can you?—those passionate glances,
Lavished upon you like rays of the sun!

Find fast delight in gay amorous dances;
Flirtings concluded as soon as begun—
Live on for only what day by day chances.

Ah, but your nights must be solemn and eerie,
After the moths with burnt wings depart;
Morns must be dull, and the afternoons dreary;
Horror be thick in the tomb of the heart—
Life must seem purposeless, vapid, and weary.

Might you but long for a smile that is tender—
Words without meaning for any but you;
Might you but shrink from the gaze and the
splendor,
Filling a sphere no thought can imbue;
Might you but tire of your gifts to be vendor—

Pining for love in a word that grows colder—
Sate of flattery and glances that feign,
Here should you rest, and never grow older;
Here should time strive to be cruel in vain—
Fairer he'd make you for one fond beholder.

Living—through sunshine, or stormy weather,
Nestling and closer forever we'd cling—

Lighter and closer than feather to feather
Under the breast and over the wing.
Dying—I would we might die together.

Why do I dream? Before I have ended,
Onward you rove, and my song wastes in air.
So let the plaint be forever suspended;
Worship attend you while yet you are fair—
But chasms, fate-cloven, can never be mended.

So wrote he, and so published; and his song
Fell under her brown eyes who was its theme.
Wherefore it came about—or was it chance?
Such wondrous things do happen in this world—
That the Dulce singers inland came again,
Bringing to country-folk melodious nights.
And at the village that McPherson loved
To overlook from slopes that drank the sun,
Fair Christine grew the merest trifle ill—
She had a cold, or something of the sort—
And held the troupe a week. But much she saw,
Albeit the Basso urged her need of rest—
Of one who, certes, saw as much of her.
His house she visited; and, eke, the nooks—

Though out-door rambles were not good for colds—
Where most in pleasant weather he would sit.
And much she liked the situation; much,
Perchance, the situation's lord she liked.
So they grew close, and intimate; nay, fond;
Yet spoke no word of love, unless the eyes,
And visible inclination each to each,
Confessed what best were said, yet was not said.
For like one walking in the trance of sleep,
When light is useless, and the aim absurd,
McPherson wandered darkly through those days,
Drawn past the warm star pulsing at his side,
And reaching towards that thin ideal height,
Where, like a planet pale far up in heaven,
Shone the cold myth of dreams. Yet well he saw
The beauty of the soul beneath his feet,
And felt that he were happiest of our kind
To lift it up.

For not a fleshless love,
Carved in the subtle windings of his brain
And cold as moonlight, hindered him alone;
The windiest trump of hunger-bitten fame
Blared fierce division in his towering hope,
And he held back, and questioned with himself:

“The woman suits my eye, my mind, my heart;
I find no flaw. Domestic life has here
Its opportunity; and if foregone,
How can I think ’twill come again to me.
But stay! Am I content to trim the sails
Of thought and fancy, for the sluggish ponds
Of common life? to sink low to the plane.
Of tame unvarying observances, and grow
The willing slave of Omphale, and peace?
Are heights scaled easier by Egeria’s aid—
The haunting eye that beckons higher up,
The spirit-foot that never hurts, or rolls,
Or by the human weight of one who leans
And must be lift?

Debating thus, and burned
By fiery purpose to hold nothing dear,
Nor shirk the weariness of loveless years,
If such the means to win the peaks of art,
Yet ever doubtful if his mood were best,
And longing for the woman’s voice and step
About his lonely rooms—the ideal arm
Transmuted to our better flesh and blood—
He poised betwixt the dance of sun and shade,
And let occasion slip.

The troupe at length,
Grudging—save Christine—time so idly spent,
Grew clamorous for departure: “What the use
To longer stay in a dull town like this,
And miss the profits for which we set out?”
Straightway they went, and with them went Christine,
With reddened eyes, and heart that pricked for pain.
But much the Basso inwardly rejoiced,
And watched his times, and gently strove to please,
While twenty months climbed up the rounds of light,
And hid in heaven. Then Christine saw his worth,
And ’gan within herself to hold discourse,
Whether to make him happy with consent,
Or longer dally with a distant dream,
That fled before her, like a will-o’-the-wisp,
Through unattainable, uncertain paths,
Dwindling and dying in the dark. Till thus,
As week by week she indecisive hung,
Half ready to cast out the heedless old,
And open wide her heart-doors to the new,
Her sister-singer thrust beneath her eye

A scrap of love-sick verse that bore her name—

Another folly of McPherson's coin—

Nestling, 'mid numerous poems, in a print:

O, wild the April evenings; O, sad the sullen
weather!

O full of gusty moaning, and dirge notes over-
blown!

My love and I no longer are sitting here together,
And the dirges coldly mutter, "She is flown!"

O long ago she left me, and fled I know not
whither;

But in her eye was sweetness, and in her mouth
a song.

She left me, as the summer leaves the tender
blossoms to wither,

And the wintry hours behind her seem so long.

I wonder, O I wonder if again her smile shall
find me,

And on my willing spirit its perfect beauty cast,
Or if remembrance only, with pensive spell must
bind me,

And forever chain my patience to the past.

O weary heart, be silent; the times are blind
with folly;

With promises of pleasure and policies of gain;
'Tis not for any maiden to long be melancholy,
Or believe that song and beauty are in vain.

Bear up, weak heart, be changeless: seek no vain
balm for sorrow,

But roam thy hidden chamber, and uncom-
plaining mourn;
And rave wild April evenings, unfold each
gloomy morrow,

Till the weary-footed future is outworn.

This having read, pale Christine fled apart,
Cut out the verses—read them o'er again—
And spent an aching morning, full of tears
As outside April weather.

But anon,
With force of will she struggled out to calm,
And said, "This is a trifle. I to him
Am but the merest fiction of the fancy—
A thing he holds far off to write songs to.
If in his soul were that embittering need
That real lovers have of real maids,

He would be here this day—this hour—and say so.
His songs—Pah! they are hollow as sea-shells—
Meant for the multitudinous public eye,
And not for mine. So, henceforth, to my thought,
He shall be nothing but a memory
To which discretion grudges all its room.”

And when, not long, thereafter, Basso sat
Alone with her, and round them throbbed the
spring,
With dancing leaf and sweeping breadths of green,
And the clear song of swift-returning birds,
He saw a brimming light o’erflood her eyes,
And knew the time that he had waited long,
And drew her to him, and poured forth his hope,
And life took orient shape.

Then in good time,
Without unnatural and long delay,
These two, abandoned public shows, and wed.
And as they passed beyond the public ear,
Into the haven of domestic calm
For them secluded, like a gallant ship,
That, sailing into port, lets off a gun
To tell how it has ridden down the waves

And come to harbor, Basso tossed a card
Straightway to him, who, by his sapphire lake,
Sat trimming fancy with poetic shears,
Which, when McPherson read, and felt perforce—
Waking at once to sense—how great the loss
Of such a pearl as had no duplicate,
A pang tore through him like a bolt, sky-dropped,
And he felt faint, and wandered round his hills,
Like one for whom the daylight is no more,
Till, calmer grown with time, deep in his heart
He shut the mournful vision of the past,
As we conceal the deathless looks and tones
Of one long dead—shadowing it round with firs
And cold, thick moss—at once a grave and shrine,
Where shape unsympathetic never found,
For sneer or comment, its obtrusive way.

Thenceforth he daily ripened. Toil was sweet
For its full-handed harvests—peace of mind—
Growth, fame. So, till five years had clanged
and barred

Their gates against the clamor of the world,
He gave his life to labor. Few the friends
Who knew him closely; yet a few there were,

With whom he chaffered in his walks, or held
Tea-table council to discern the times.
To most, he seemed a waif of glittering ice,
Insoluble—the drift of wintry seas;
Yet, deep in life's dim caves, he nursed a flame,
And to a memory, loyalty. In vain,
A neighbor's friendly, managing, match-make wife
Would set him face to face with one sole maid,
And with pretence of duties leave the room;
There was no dainty scene of amorous pith
Worth pausing at the keyhole to explore;
No utterance graver than small social chat,
Unless McPherson spent in monologue,
The fringe of thought that rustled round a theme
By chance suggested, and to confidence
Unapt as metaphysics.

What he wrote—
His poems—mostly struck a minor key;
Like winds that wandering over mounded graves,
And over tear-wet cheeks, in the abodes
Of miserable men, breathe evermore
Susurrous melancholy. Yet they touched,
In hallowed souls, responsive elements;
For faith was in them—fear and love of God,

And gentle will to men: men fiercely bold
To dare the wrath of Him who rightly reigns,
Abuse His sacrifice, and slough with wars,
And lust, and lucre-getting, all their days.
Suddenly grew in sympathetic hearts,
That felt his influence, as a bed of reeds
Is stirred by every motion of the wind,
Desire to look their poet in the face,
And hear his volumed, sweet, infectious voice,
In its own natural tone. But he demurred—
Scorning the platform where the prostitute,
The coarse virago, and the man who deals
In social revolutionary schemes,
Disgorge a buzzard dose of mental froth
Less succulent than the turbid foam of floods,
And sallow with the ghastliness of schemes
Swept up from hearts as barren of true aims
As prairie rivers of good granite rock.
Nor grew he to the mood awhile to flit,
Mouthing, before the curious clapping crowds,
Without stern effort, and the coarse appeal
Of promised profits to æsthetic needs.
“But I must save yon timber on the slope”—
He said; “nor let my vandal neighbor hack

Its comely boles for boards that have their price.
I will turn showman of a thing that roars,
Yet goes about uncaged. So much, per night,
To see the animal and hear him roar!"

And forth he went, and lecturing far and near,
Got plenteous gain, and saved the pretty wood,
And made it sweet for one who loves to dream.

But in his lecturing, as one night he stood
Carelessly glancing through a decent crowd—
The people of an inland country town—
He found a face set round with funeral weeds,
And thinned by wear or grief. It was the face
To him supremest, in this much-faced world;
The face that haunted thought, as a dark night
Is haunted by the memories of the moon.
Thus, then to front it, drove the hot flush back
From cheek and forehead, and his strong frame
shook

In momentary ague. But none knew;
For with a nervous cough, and effort huge
As one who lifts a weight that tasks his strength,
He curbed his weakness, and dashed through his
hour,
Looking her way no more.

And how she passed,
He saw not; for a literary group
Of lyceum chiefs, and elders spectacled,
And pretty misses sleek with sentiment,
Gathered to take his hand, as he came down
From the low platform. But he hurried forth,
Glad to escape their well-meant compliment
And observations wholly just and wise,
And once alone, sleepless, and full of thought,
Went wandering, all the long and withering night,
Upon the frosty side-walks of the town.

And as he crept upon his weary rounds,
Backwards and forwards, with indifferent heed
Of house-dogs menacing his heels, the sun,
Uprising, stood above the frosty hills,
And woke the world to splendor. But his mind
Grew blinder for the natural light. The land
Swam full of shadows and uncertain paths;
And since, in sooth, he could not shape excuse
To seek the woman where she made her home,
Nor dared he think she kept a niche for him
In some dim corner of her curtained heart—
Some nook unknown to all but stealthy steps—

He saw but one way open; and that way
Was just the rail by which all men might go.
Thereat, he turned, and sped along the street,
Intent to quit the town. But in mid-course,
As he was hasting with the cheerier mind
That action kindles—action settles doubt—
And all the nightmare of the sullen night
Evanished like a cloud, and he rejoiced,
That, from a useless interview, his life
Had not emerged worse tangled in the mesh
Of hopeless longing and inveterate pain,
From a cot window, open to the street
Beside his path, a woman leaned to scan,
With eye uplift, the cloudless skies of morn.
It was Christine.

So each looked well on each,
Stood ground, nor flushed, nor turned away. And
he:

“Shall I come in?”

“O surely!” said Christine,
And hastened to a door, and drew a bolt,
And they touched hands, and walked along a hall
To a back parlor where there was a fire.

But he, with thought full of the doleful weeds
The lady wore, and eager for their cause,
Asked after Basso. Thereat, Christine told
The mournful story of her husband's fate—
A tale of slow consumption, and of death,
That scattered love-linked hopes, two years before.

And now there was a sudden pause of speech—
A moment of abstraction still as days
When the leaves fade. Bright in the widow's eye,
A rose-hued tear formed pendulous and fell.
McPherson looked straight forward in the fire.
Thus sitting, busied each with secret thought,
And weaving past and future through the warp
Of present hap, a door flung open wide,
And, like a bird that flits across a bower,
With flash of beauty and with burst of song,
There entered, in night's trailing, pure white robe,
A blonde-haired cherub, with brown, gentle eyes,
And bright, glad face—a miniature Christine,
With just a touch of the dead Basso seen,
Or here, or there—that to the widow ran,
With cries of fondness, and was fondly clasped
Close to the motherly heart.

“A lovely child!”

McPherson thought, and said: “And you two dwell Alone?”

“Not we alone,” was the reply;

“I have a boy, a child of but two years—

Born but a month before my husband died.

We three, together with a widowed nurse,

Who joins her humble fortunes unto mine,

Are living here, where I have always lived.”

Again a pause. But in that fateful space

Of transient silence, through McPherson’s mind,

Ran, swift as darkness, this chill argument:

“This is the only woman I have loved,

Or shall love ever: free again to wed,

Perchance I yet might win her. But the past:

What can blot out the history it has made?

What can redeem her heart from hidden love

Of him to whom she gave her virgin vows?

What can obliterate memory of the hours

Spent in endearments, and, alack! the wish

That my touch might sometimes be changed for
his?

Ah, tears will for that Basso trickle out—

How could I honor her unless they should?

And she must be from him still less divorced
By these two children, that perpetuate him,
And half the fullness of her mind withhold
From me and mine. Few that have loved and
lost,
Can deem the living equal with the dead;
The dead who passed ere fled life's great romance;
And any trifling difference expressed,
Might band herself and children—three to one—
In momentary sullenness or words,
Worse for their numbers; since 'tis harder far
To placate many—noisy chubs at that,
And inconsiderate—than a wife alone.
Be wise; the ground seems hollow!"

So his face,

Changing in hue as thought evolved, and curbed
The frankness felt at meeting, grew perplexed
Even to sternness; and the woman's eye,
Following, with shrewd observance, through all
change,
Instinctively divined his mental mood.
Thereat, she led the way to other things,
Probing, by methods of the feminine art,
The order of his wont from day to day,

And finding what the years had made of him.
And he, drawn by the spell of personal grace,
And by the charm of quiet sense, that spiced
The clear, mellifluous volume of her talk,
Long as he might, lingered. And as he went,
Holding her shapely hand, and looking close
Upon the face where worth made beauty fair,
He said his steps might find her cot again.
And frankly, she: "Why not?" and so they parted.

But, ere a little week had measured time,
Divided from the spell that presence casts,
And jealous of the fair and blameless child,
That, from her mother's arms had given back
His searching gaze, with pure and trustful eyes,
Humbly, headlong as horror through his soul
Came dismal fancies, and such trains of doubt
As first perplexed him. And through lecturing
months,

Questioning himself from day to day, he mused:
"What should a perfect woman do? Christine
Hath been, through influential years, one flesh
With Basso: she hath borne him heirs, and mixed
Their dual natures—spirit, bone, and blood—

In two effusions of a heaven-blessed love.
Will it be fair to Basso and his babes,
If she become flesh of another man?
Must she not be far nobler not to wed
A second time? Do I do well, to seek
To pass a change upon true widowhood?"
Then, in another frame, sometimes he thought:
"The Apostle says, 'Let younger women marry.'
It is most natural—Christine is young—
A comely widow, and, I think, a good.
No other woman have I ever loved;
And I, perchance, one day may marry her."
But, home returned, he fell to former ways,
Resuming all the methods of a life
That ran in ruts and never swerved aside.

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And Christine, left to ponder on his moods,
And knowing well that he came back no more
Because her days were bound in motherhood,
Determined not to wed a second time.
For, though her mirror told her she was fair—
Aye, full of fairness—and life held romance
To brighten mourning weeds to maiden white,
Yet was there something due to self-respect,

And happiness was far too nice to thrive
In the rude keeping of a selfish hand.
Her married years, her happy, wifely love,
She held as wholly sacred—sweetest part
Of all the strenuous and regretted past;
Nor, for the sake of any man that lived,
Would she conceal them as unfortunate,
Or speak of them with smirk and bated breath.
She felt due thankfulness for beauteous babes—
For dear was motherly care. To plan of hers,
They were no obstacle, but stimulus;
And every sacrifice was sweet, for them.
So she would battle on against the world
Alone, nor ever tempt a doubtful fate.

And so the days went shadowing to eclipse,
Till that stern angel, who observes our ways
And marks the lightest thought of every man,
Had writ the haps of swart years in his books,
And clasped with seals the horrid, poisonous leaves,
To keep the record safe for Judgment Time.
Meanwhile, McPherson grew, through toilsome
change,
Purer and greater in the grasp of art,

And wrought still higher up the slippery steep
Before men's eyes; but never strove to learn
How fared the widow in her lonely life,
Till, once, grown nervous from long overwork,
Through warm-housed, winter months, he was
enjoined

By one whose skill he trusted, as he loved
His life, and hoped for length of useful days,
To give his weary brain a space of rest;
To travel somewhat, and see pleasant sights,
And change his habits.

So he put aside
The routine of employment, sought the sea,
And, shallop-borne, flew on the bellying waves
That set to lonely coasts; and then he went
Into the maze of cities, where he saw
Splendor and vice, and poverty and vice;
And, gazing in the faces of the throngs
Endlessly shifting, like the subtle forms
Of the kaleidoscope, he wondered much
Whence they all came, and went, in endless change;
How lived, and how combined. Then, having yet
Some meagre space of idling time, he slipped,
Unheralded and secretly, one morn,

Into the village where the woman dwelt.
“For I will see her from afar,” quoth he;
“Perhaps her influence may be felt no more.
But I have loved her once—yea, loved her long—
Though with a weakening love these many years.
I will just see how time affects her face,
Or if he pluck the beauty from her eye,
Or if a silver thread coil like a snake
Amid the sunny treasures of her hair.
And I will see her children—ah!”

Such was

His purpose; but when questioning one he met,
Of her condition, he was told she lay
Low with a dreadful sickness. Then he paced,
In doubtful mood, on towards the cot whose place
Memory had kept familiar. At the gate
He paused, revolving o’er and o’er his right
To enter, and the use to her or him.
But, while he doubted, to his inner sense
Came an impulsion irresistible,
That he was needed. So he gained the door,
And was admitted by a sleepy nurse,
Who cautioned him to silence; “For,” she said,
“The lady, sir, indeed is very low.”

Then he moved in on tip-toe through the hall,
And looked across the chamber where, before,
He once had sat, when time had greener years—
Had sat, and loved the sight of her who now,
White as her couch, and wasted by disease,
Lay with closed eyes uplifted as in prayer.
But when, with stealth, he stepped to gain a chair,
The sound aroused her; and her opened eyes
Met his; and her sick face gave welcome smile;
And her weak hand was lifted out for his.
Then she, "O I have longed and prayed for this—
So much I need to see you ere I die."

But he, with all the love of other days
Rekindled, and aflame at sight of her,
With tear-dimmed eyes: "Dear love, talk not of
death,
But talk of health, and happy, lengthened days,
And life with one who now knows all the force
And keen necessity of deathless love.
Let death be far away—O far away!"

But she, "Perchance, beyond this blighting world,
Where fates are seldom woven as we wish,
We two may see each other in the light

Of cheerful days. But never here;—not here.
Life's shallow current, wasted in the sand
Of ceaseless care, has almost ebb'd away.
My strength, o'erspent is gone.

Through all these years,
Since I was left alone to earn my bread,
And nurture the dependent innocence
Of my sweet babes, a music-teacher, I
Have striven unceasingly. Until of late,
My will and hope were firm. I earned support,
And felt the gratitude of those who see
Heaven shape its goodness to their feeble powers.
But now so many teachers are afield—
And each, no doubt, has care and need enough—
My class has dwindled like a flock of birds
That hunters follow. Wherefore, I have pieced
My scanty income by the seamstress' gains,
Or teaching writing, or some kindred thing.
O'ertasked no doubt, but more oppressed by care,
I toiled along with stout unquailing heart,
Until my noble boy—a little saint
In beauty and in gentleness,—grew sick,
With a child's ailment, and rose up no more.
O, he was lovely! Often he would see

"The pensive shade upon my wasting face,
And say: 'Dear Mamma, when I'm old enough,
I'll stand between you and this biting world,
And you shall rest from all these weary cares.'
But I thank God he shall not soil or wear
His dainty shoulder, tugging at the load
Of life's misfortunes. Happy is the grave,
That shuts the pure from danger and from need.
Happy, I think it too, for such as I"—

"Not so!" McPherson cried; "You still shall live,
And live as free of care as all my love
And faithful toil can make you. Let the past
Go hide its head amid its deadly graves;
But let the future rise with ready feet,
And quiet smiles, and pledge of new romance.
Rouse up, I pray, from this wan lethargy,
And be to me second to God alone!"

But she with feebler breath, o'ertasked by talk,
And the excitement of a wish fulfilled,
"I would for your sake I might longer live;
But life has spent its forces in my frame,
Battling the fever. I am past all hope—
In this world. You may only close my eyes:

For that God sends you—that—yes—something more.

Oh, if you love me, hear my last request;
See you my child—my little sweet Christine?
God grant to her a happier life than mine.
I have no relative in all the world
Fitted to take a trust so sensitive,
And make her what I'd have her. I appeal,
By all the love you ever felt for me;
By all the privilege of dying love—
That surely now is generously heard—
That her you take for yours, when I am gone,
To be your child, as she thus far is mine;
To be an object of your fatherly care
Through all her girlish days. Is it too much?"
And keen and hungry her beseeching eyes
Looked into his.

But he let go her hand,
And moving round to where the young child sat,
Close clasped her in his piteous arms, and said:
"She shall be yours and mine until I die,
And I will do by her a father's part,
And love her as you love her. Should you meet
Her guardian angel up above the blue,

As years roll on, he shall bring word of her;
Shall tell of her unfolding to be like
Her mother, by my care."

And then the sick:

"Come near, I pray, and let me kiss you both,
And press you to my heart; for time is brief,
And I am weary, and I fain would sleep.
But I am happy now, and die content;
Yet, in my Saviour's house, if so He please,
One day I shall meet both of you with love,
And all that glorious life beyond the blue
We'll pass as near together as we may."

So they bent low to her, and she embraced,
With feeble arms, her lover and her child,
And kissed them both on brow, and cheek, and
eyes—

Eyes blind with tears; but she, she did not weep—
The dying do not weep; and him she thanked
For all the love that he had felt for her,
In past or present, and that he made smooth
Her pathway from the world, by taking up
The burden of the child she left behind.
And then she slept.

But at the dead of night,
When all was silent in the dreary house,
And the o'erweary nurse drowsed in her chair,
McPherson, watching by the bed, beheld
Christine's brown eyes unfold with a bright smile
Of recognition; and she moved her hand
To show that she would have him lift her up.
So he upraised her, and she laid her head
Gently, and lovingly, against his breast,
And looked up in his eyes—a peaceful look,
And full of hope and happiness—and thus,
A moment held, she passed away.

But he,
With heart that must have broken but for tears,
Long gazing in her face, clasped o'er and o'er
The lifeless clay from which the thought had fled;
Then laid her down, and drew the thin dark lids
Across the orbs that needed not the light.

But when all funeral rites were duly paid,
McPherson, with the child that now was his,
Set out for his own home. And with him, then,
He took the coffined body of Christine,
And the cold ashes of her husband too,

And of the little boy that grew between,
When, full of life, they were as full of love;
And brought them to a churchyard near his home,
And laid them side by side. "For these," he
said,

"Are my own family—all; all that she loved,
Shall evermore be dear to me."

And there,

On pleasant evenings, often you may see
The Poet and the little maid Christine,
Who come to trim the sod, and pass an hour
Beside the grave of her whom still they love,
Whom still they hope one day again to meet,
And trust she hopes as much to meet with them.
A costly sculpture stands above her head,
And at the heads of Basso and the child;
And weeping willows whisper there a tone
Too wild and lonely for articulate words.

But in his house McPherson rears the child,
With care of conscience, manners, mind, and taste.
He finds her teachers of the very best,
And talks to her of both her parents gone,
But of her mother most: and when he dies

She will have all the wealth that now is his,
For he is as a father, and she calls
Him by that name. But day by day he kneels
Before the picture of the dead Christine,
And prays, that cured of every selfish aim,
He may, at last, be found clad in a robe
Whitened by Calvary, and gain the place
Where she, and those she loved, have entered in,
And be forever dear to them and her.



A LIBRARY RAMBLE.

Βρεξεξεξεξεξ̃ Κοαξ̃ Κοαξ̃

TO MRS. E. R. KLINE,

These verses (about one-half of which were written under her roof, in the winter of 1865-6), are affectionately inscribed by the son of her brother. They are the product of no captious and unfragrant spirit, nor of a spirit insensible to many excellences, upon the whole, in those herein criticised. Yet, taking the individual performance of each subject, in entire extent, it is not felt that injustice has anywhere been done.

A LIBRARY RAMBLE.

I.

IN the slow hours of long, midsummer days,
When half-fed dogs run mad and take to biting,
When thermometric columns "go up kiting,"
And the hot air seems almost bound to blaze,
Adown the gullet slip dissolving ices
Without much provocation or assistance;
A good cigar, too, aids life's weak resistance,
And *sans culotte*—the briefest hint suffices.

2.

Then as we lie at full length, wooing quiet,
Or sit in shadow pleasant to the eyes—
(With here and there a sudden slap at flies),
The brain, long brightening by abstemious diet,

Glow mildly for a book. We'll try a poet:

But which? No matter; any bard worth crown-
ing.

Ah, here's a yeoman of Parnassus—Browning!
Ripe grows his crop of fancies—let us mow it.

3.

A dozen lines flow smooth as summer zephyr;
Then comes a sentence chafing like a storm,
Out of connection, questionable of form,
And guiltless of ideas as a heifer.
We ponder o'er its meaning, rub the head,
Twist in our *fauteuille*, or slow pace the floor,
And seem to hear Poe's Raven—"Nevermore!"
And wonder why such things are writ, or read.

4.

For poetry is thought perfumed by beauty,
As handkerchiefs are sprinkled with cologne;
And though the modes of genius are its own,
To common sense it owes the common duty.
Thoughts that are clear, no true bard will make
muddy;

Tones that are sweet, he sweetly will dispense;
His half-conceptions, round-about-intense
Nerve-plunges will lie perdu in his study.

5.

So, Browning exit! Let them read his lumber,
Who tug at Sanskrit, or Perpetual Motion.
But, could we get our money back, a notion
Pervades our brain, his books would not encumber
Shelf-room again.

Much abler was his wife,*
Who seems a woman to have been created,
Chiefly with Robert Browning to be mated,
And scold in pedant fashion all her life.

6.

Her books are many; but in August weather,
With Fahrenheit at ninety-nine degrees,
Good-bye to works so clearly works as these;
And she and Robert shall be passed together.

* We confess to liking many things that Mrs. Browning has written. But yet, although her place is high enough among female poets, we doubt if any one can fairly say she is not pedantic. Moreover, she is sometimes nearly as opaque as her husband.

Shall we read Tennyson? We love him well.
Or Matthew Arnold? Him we love no less.*
These, among living Masters, well express
The worth of culture to the chorded shell,

7.

And like our Bryant, filled with that repose
Found in the eyes of nature, and the antique,
Mysterious wisdom of the polished Greek,
Help us forget the fierce, material throes
Of this confounding and consuming age.
To lotus lands and quiet thoughts they lead us;
With "Sweetness," "Light," and not with "Pro-
gress" feed us,
Till we grow thankful that our heritage

8.

In human things is partly calm and pure.
Shall we read Longfellow?—the genial dreamer,
Who, though of Massachusetts, is no screamer
Of dogmas quiet people can't endure.

* This line applies only to Mr. Arnold's verse, and not even to all of that. His dismal, rationalistic inflammation is certainly not a thing to love.

The finest flavor of the Middle Ages,*
Mellow and distant as the tones that float
Landward at evening from a fluter's boat,
Lends happy relish to his many pages.

9.

In continental matrice was he moulded,
And Deutsch hexameters he loves, I ween,
As all must know who read Evangeline,
And breathe the airs in which her life is folded.
But who writes much must sometime needs be tame;
Or, try at tragedy perhaps and fail;
And hereby hangs a not o'erflattering tale,
Yet none the less we magnify his fame.

10.

Shall we try Whittier?† He is a Quaker,
And there's a sombre spirit in his lines.

* Mr. Longfellow, although penetrated here and there by his surroundings, seems to me to be largely affected by Mediævalism. I believe he belongs, quite unconsciously, to the reflex wave in New England, that growing weary of beating the barren rocks of Rationalism, is likely ere long to be surging backward towards Roman superstitions, in as massive force as it rolled away from Puritanism to its present bed of doubt.

† While Mr. Whittier seems the most American of New England poets, he commonly talks as if he were also the purest and the best.

His mental eye with much eye-water shines—
(Indeed that visual orb may be a Shaker).
The mists of the Atlantic, the pines' moaning,
The drab of creed, and his keen hate of wrong,
Have filled his musical and ceaseless song
With a perpetual, plaintive undertoning.

11.

And yet we ever need wan Jeremiahs—
Wet-eyed enthusiasts of the Whittier type;
Singers with heaven's own pity grown so ripe
That they feel every woe of earth's Pariahs,
And consecrate it by their mournful verse.
The poet in his place is a true preacher—
(A thing that many sometimes doubt of Beecher,
For he "slops over," if he does no worse).

12.

Holmes flares around in gossip and in bandy—
A clever mixture of clear flame and tallow.
And ———'s prosy, likewise shallow—
A literary hack for all jobs handy.

But Keble, Cox, and Bickersteth, have given
To quiet musing and to holy sorrow,
Songs, whose unconscious wisdom seems to bor-
row
The tenderness and melody of heaven.

13.

The books of Alexander Smith to-day
May stand untouched; and yet for summer feed-
ing,
And light digestion, there's but little reading
We might not with more profit put away.
Pale, passion-blasted Swinburne, swan-like singing
Wild death-songs of a putrid soul, we pass;—
Ah, Whitman! Are there donkeys on Parnass?
But Kingsley's voice with truer tone is ringing.

14.

Of female poets, Ingelow and Rossetti
Shall each have bay-leaves if in our bestowal.
But stop! Let's turn a book by Russell Lowell;
Red lined—a binder's model—costly—pretty.

And first, we have the badly rhyming "Fable,"
Peppered with smartnesses and thin conceit;
Then dialect, for quantity not beat,
And quality—defend us! we are able

15.

To read the dialect of scarce a man
In all the world; we do not make exception;
For things in embryo, wherefore predilection?
High art admits no mongrels in her plan.
Give dialect to horses! Give to Lowell
Due praise for prose and for some minor songs,
But his "Cathedral"* to no muse belongs—
When reverence should inspire his ink don't flow
well.

* The following from Mr. Lowell's "Cathedral" is perhaps a fair exhibit of the interior of his mind, at least, he himself says it is:

"In this brown-fisted rough, this shirt-sleeved Cid,
This backwoods Charlemagne of empires new,
Whose blundering heel instinctively finds out
The gontier foot of speechless dignities,
Who, meeting Cesar's self, would slap his back,
Call him "Old Hoss" and challenge to a drink,
My lungs draw braver air, my breast dilates
With ampler manhood," etc.

That is the abominable trash inspired in the mind of Mr. Lowell, by the magnificent temple that has enshrined the prayers, the

16.

The poet to the shelf! Disgusted, then
With a low sigh, awhile we stand and ponder—
Reach forth a hand and let it vaguely wander
Across the octavo backs of prosier men.
But as a frightened bird that soars and settles,
Uncertain where 'tis safe to fold the wing,
And even when lighting leaps with fearful spring,
As if he hear the hum of hungry kettles,

17.

The hand goes up, then down; the mind objecting
Here to the subject-matter, there to style,
Until at length we hap upon Carlyle,
And give a pause to sifting and rejecting.

tears, the hopes, and the grandest memories of the grand and devout, as well as of the lowly and devout, of the successive generations reaching far back into the centuries.

A much greater man than Mr. Lowell,—Coleridge—thus speaks of a Cathedral: "On entering a Cathedral, I am filled with devotion and with awe; I am lost to the actualities that surround me, and my whole being expands into the infinite; earth and air, nature and art, all swell up into eternity, and the only sensible impression left, is that I am nothing."—*Coleridge's Works*, Vol. 4, Page 235.

Verily Boston has gone to seed!

Forth comes a book ; and comfortably seated,
We try a jolt through corduroy or Choctaw,
Our author pounding straw-men with the lock-
jaw,
And for hot summer weather too much heated.

18.

But we can half forgive his earlier faults,
Though neither very few nor very small ;
For radical fury once besets us all,
And youth will "shoot Niagara." But age halts,
And glances towards the bottom of the abyss.
"Gray heads for wisdom:" ripeness comes of
time.

Carlyle knows now—that order is no crime,
And dreamers' worlds may be far worse than this.

19.

And he has words for wise authority—
The bar divine that shuts the wicked in ;
Proclaims irreverence the deadly sin—
A soulless tyrant "The Majority."

Alas! that some, who, following his banner,
Have passed for thinkers, through long-punished
years,
Should be but mighty mouthers with long ears,
Whose chiefest weight is in their heavy manner.

20.

There's many a book of marvellous pretences,
That yet is nothing but a slender joke—
A little daisy mimicking the oak—
Great in the strength one drop of rain condenses.
In Emerson, for instance, we shall find
A juicelessness, reminding of a drum,
Or, pre-historic bug—the genus, Hum—
Entomolite—that rattles to the wind,

21.

Except in “English Traits.” There are some pages
Of unexpected pith, well worth the reading—
The author's Pegasus in quiet leading,
And not cavorting through Berserkir rages.
The horse divine has rarely much of spirit,
But is as Clavileno, tame and quiet:

Your Quixotes only undertake to fly it,
But men of sense pace on the ground, or near it.

22.

For, after all, our horizon is bounded
By the same visual rim of sky and plain.
To each, alike, the sunlight, wind, and rain,
And incident by which the life is rounded.
The wisest, like the weakest, can but tell
Of what he sees, and hears, and feels, and wishes.
A whale is but a fish with other fishes,
Ev'n if he blow and try to be a swell.

23.

Give him due credit who can sing most sweetly,
Or say the noblest things of actual life;
And name him "Sage," whose clear, wise words
are rife
With what transfigures Duty most completely.
But shun the wretch who wriggles, writhes, and
squirms,
Through High Dutch fogs in ludicrous contortion.
You're not required to pity his abortion,
Though you may send him vermifuge for worms.

24.

Up goes Carlyle. And now the dubious eye
Sees volumes labelled, "Dickens." He is one,
Who, in his own way, useful work has done,
Reminding us that squalid poverty
Is human, like ourselves. Is not this all?
He is one-sided, narrow; never drew
A mannered man, a model fine and true,
But throned his seedy heroes at the Hall.

25.

Ev'n dear old Thackeray is sometimes tedious,
Surrendering art to a poor dismal sneer.
Yet he for tenderness scarce has a peer,
Albeit he seem a misanthrope egregious.
Does he lack reverence? Pass the fault in sorrow;
It is the woe of all this latter time.
He hated shams, loved manhood that is prime,
And fought his day to glorify its morrow.

26.

God give him rest and rank among the angels;
The meed of one who battles well and long;

Who never cheats our hope with herald song,
Nor utters sounding lies for true evangels.
And might his mantle, wiry Curtis warming,
Hatch Potiphars and Pashas fast as chickens,
We'd cry "Encore!" Too long the oldest Dickens
In social life has ceased to be alarming.

27.

And yet this Curtis seems a twist too loose—
Facing, like Tilton, the "strong-minded" way;
Clamoring for "Woman's Rights;" which is to say,
Her right to be a gander yet a goose;
Her right to vote, hold office, play the scold
On platforms, or select a separate father
For every child she has, and without bother
Divorce him, and be common, foul, and bold.

28.

All which, to men who love their wives and
daughters,
And reverence womanhood as something pure,
And toil, that home and wedlock may endure,
Savors of hell. Far better stolen waters,

Than licensed prostitution. Let there be
An interval of during breadth between
Public corruption and a woman clean,
Wide as a continent from sea to sea.

29.

The woman—is she better than the man
By nature? She is pure from her seclusion,
As rooms are tidiest where is least intrusion;
For ev'n the worst of us leave what we can
Of coarse rank incident and slimy thought
Outside the doors, that shelter from the street
Our loved ones. Push them forth to meet
All vileness, some infection must be caught.

30.

Trollope and Collins—every book well finished—
Look down invitingly—are hard to pass.
Then, subtle Hawthorne—none shall him surpass,
And bid us hunt his mighty shade diminished.
Next, Bulwer—poet, novelist, and scholar—
Proteus returned from the far mythic caves,
Where he had idled 'neath Egyptian waves,
While dusty centuries yoked in modern collar.

31.

Close by Macaulay, fertile of romances.

Why he has been so worshipped, is a mystery.

His fictions so pervert plain English history,
That one knows less, the further he advances
Along the rhetoric rubble of fine pages.

Were words authority, we might suppose

Dutch William less a cabbage than a rose,
And England's kingliest soul in all the ages.

32.

Yonder, in bulky volumes, Walter Scott.

If one would read good novels, whose are better?

Manly and high in tone, and chaste in letter,
And little there the best could wish were not.
His gentle-folk are of the well-bred caste:

His boot-blacks never play too large a part:

Lord of proportion, his consummate art
Has summoned a procession, from the past,

33.

Of kings, queens, nobles, commoners, and thralls,
Knights, palmers, priests, monks, jews—a world
complete—

A semi-Gothic world—dim, sacred, sweet,
Lit by the weird light that on fay-land falls.
If Shakspeare have a peer, it is Sir Walter;
In scope of genius, no two draw so near.
They sought like subjects; both are wise and
clear;
And we would build to them a common altar.

34.

Cooper, our novelistic pioneer,
And Southland Simms, deserve most reverent
mention.
And Poe will have the student's close attention,
For twice, in time, his kind do not appear.
John Ruskin will have following: he is master
Of noble English, and a mine of thought
In grand old mountains and cathedrals wrought;
And he's as orthodox as one's own pastor.

35.

Of vain philosophy, we've read enough—
Buckle, and Stuart Mill, and Herbert Spencer,
And many another dreamer and dispenser
Of thin materialism and wordy stuff.

A chap who votes to follow just his nose,
And hold what reason teaches, and no more,
Against the powers above him shuts the door,
And leaves his soul as earth-bound as his toes.

36.

One school of metaphysics, and but one,
Yields common sense. Of course, the Scotch is
meant.
Reid is its father; Mansel lately lent
It lustre; but its pride is Hamilton.
In the vast sea of thought through which they
sailed,
'Tis sometimes well to follow with light oar,
Where, under cool, bright heavens, lies many a
shore,
From feebler sight impenetrably veiled.

37.

But now before us looms a Boston name—
Theodore Parker! Liberal worthy, he,
Who strove a downright Antichrist to be,
Nor ever guessed his impudence and shame!

His is the type of all the "liberal" mind:

His dead hand guides New England thought to-day:

His warlike soul has never gone away,
But wreaking ruin, lingers long behind.

38.

We seek in vain, among the Yankee writers,

For a clean humorist* of gentle will—

A smiling spirit, bright, and kind, and still:

But most are controversialists and fighters,

Mail-clad in stinging wit. Few have right humor:

They bully us forever with a smartness;

Their women plague our temper by their tartness,
Seeming to think their readers are a tumor

39.

That needs perpetual pricking. But to-day

Let them be out of mind; for as we turn,

* New England unquestionably has humorists enough of a certain kind. Men of the Josh Billings type are to be found there—men, too, of the O. W. Holmes type, whose sentences frequently read as if he thought they should be closed with double or triple admiration points. But of that refined and unfailing pleasantry, that courteous, elegant, and dignified humor, that blooms all over Irving, what has New England to show?

We see the books of Irving. We may learn
Of him, to bring our better natures into play. .
Genial he is—a humorist as fine,
As ever with an artist's cunning spun
Commingle'd webs of pathos and of fun,
And drew heaven's tears or sunshine through each
line.

40.

He feels no bitterness: he deals no blow:
He has no enemies, but all men love him;
And few would see another sit above him
On fame's clear height, within the Olympian glow.
There, let him reign while Time his shuttle throws,
And gain in peaceful souls increasing favor,
Flavoring their thought with his sweet, human
flavor.

We draw the Sketch Book: and with that, we close.

A TALE OF THE JESUIT MISSIONS.

CHAMPAIGNE was the land of Louis d'Aille-
boust,

And Barbe de Bologne was a maiden there.

He was a soldier, and came to woo;

And the brave, says Dryden, deserve the fair.

But the maid was coy, though she loved the youth,

And longed his earthly mate to be;

For to Holy Church she had pledged her truth

To be ever enamored of chastitee.

Yet when she learned that his sword he wore

In the cause of Mary and not for strife,

She yielded her hand, but nothing more;

She wedded in name, but was not a wife.

NOTE.—See Parkman's *Jesuits in North America*, pages 264 and 332.

In her father's house, a virgin pure,
She plied her needle, or told her beads,
And never a nun was more secure
From sinful thoughts and tender needs.

Ere long d'Ailleboust, for the faith's advance,
To the Jesuit Missions gave his sword;
And turning away from the fields of France,
Begged Barbe go with him, a saint adored.

But his maiden spouse repelled his prayer,
And coldly heard when he strove to speak;
For to honor her vow was her pious care,
And, what if the will of the man were weak!

Then sickness came; but ere pulse beat right,
Awhile she lay in a happy trance,
And a vision rose, on her inner sight,
That summoned her forth from the ease of France.

And she joined d'Ailleboust, and over the foam
The rude wind blew, and the frail bark bore,
Till far behind were the hills of home,
And the wilds of Canada loomed before.

But through sea-sickness, or while they sped
On a way unknown till the goal was won,
No word of love had been wrongly said,
No look of love had a vow undone.

And onward thence from year to year,
While birds were mated and rose leaves blown,
While moons were merry, or months were drear,
They dwelt together, yet lived alone.

From honor to honor d'Ailleboust arose,
With good sword carving his speedy way,
Till he gained the summit whence honor flows,
For the whole broad province confessed his sway.

And Barbe at home received each guest,
Or found her pleasure in alms and prayer;
But never a babe besieged her breast,
Or filled her thought with an earthly care.

Like a nun she came, and went, and came,
A soul too fair in her husband's eyes
To sully with passion that burns like flame—
A moment burns, and as quickly dies.

And though he longed, as his greatness grew,
For children to prattle around his knee,
The worth of a vow that is kept, he knew,
Was more to Barbe than a child could be.

They dwelt together, yet far apart.

They loved, but their love was like the snow.
A veil, fate-woven, hung round each heart,
And what was hidden they dared not know.

To souls thus living death brought no fears.

They died, and death was the end of pain.
Now, over their graves two hundred years
Have poured the treasures of sun and rain.

And, musing, I think in the life above,

Where vows that hinder must disappear,
They fear no longer, but tell their love,
And dwell together more fond than here.

SUNSET AND NIGHT.

THE low, far sunset lingers in the mist.
The sinuous river glimmers on the plain.
The umber woodlands, by faint, warm winds kissed,
Nod drowsily to drowsier fields of grain.
A single bird is skimming through the haze.
A cowboy's whistle drones from flats afar.
A maiden at her window stands to gaze,
And wait the coming of the evening star.
Nor long she waits: the slow descending sun
Touches the rim of earth's remotest hill,
And, like a monarch when his reign is done,
Withdraws his faded light, and all is still.

Now, hanging low within the holy height,
The timid crescent beams with virgin eye,
And many a window gleams upon the night,
And shadowy forms go slowly wandering by.

But she—the maiden—yet in silence stands,
And views the crescent and eve's liquid star,
The farm-house lights amid the lonely lands,
The passing forms that scarce the stillness mar.

Not yet to her has come the dreamy time
Of blushing love, when vows are whispered low,
Not yet her prince has left his native clime,
Or if he comes, his path he does not know.

Perchance she thinks "He too sees yonder moon;
He too beholds the love-light of the star;
The faint winds soothe him with their pleasant tune,
And give him strength to journey from afar."

Perchance she thinks how she will meet his gaze
When first she finds him standing at her side;
How give her hand; how pass the after-days,
And not outgrow the honors of a bride.

But now she turns; the moon and star have set,
Where sank the sun behind the gloomy hill.
The murmuring airs seem hollow with regret;
The night grows dense; the formless street is chill.

She turns; her curtain falls; but sudden light
Comes flaming through it to the outer air;
And, pictured on the fair and stainless white,
I see a kneeling figure bowed in prayer.

God shield her well; for she has perfect trust
The long illusion of the years to meet.
But ah! She wears this troubled frame of dust,
And many a snare is waiting for her feet.

God shield her well; and shield us all; for deep
The darkness that on every pathway lies.
And when, toil-worn, we sink at last to sleep,
Safe be the rest that seals our heavy eyes.

DEAD LEAVES.

THE dead leaves whirl before the blast
Of the rude Autumn's breath.

Ah, whither do they fly so fast—

Unresting even in death?

The sisters of the mouldering grass—

Pale troops of summer's slain, alas!

For them but shrouds of snow.

When Spring this way again shall pass,

New leaves the trees shall overflow

To whisper with the dallying airs;

But what dark fate for these prepares,

What heart shall care to know?

INVITATION—IN MORTE.

COME with me: my little boat
Fearlessly an ocean rides.
Sit beside me: we will float
O'er the lone and pathless tides,
Safely as a cygnet glides.

Silver-streaming is the light:
Rose and silver is the sea:
It is neither day nor night:
Does the air seem chill to thee?
Ah, it is not so to me.

Closer draw if you are cold;
Let me warm you with a kiss;
Clinging round you, I will hold
Till we reach some land of bliss
Where we shall not pine for this.

Where no face grows wan with death,
And no rapture mates with woe:
Where the summer's spicy breath
Ever breathes a music low—
Sweet that land—O let us go.



PAST SIN.

YOU will not care to know how deep my sin,
When bared by Judgment Day;
Nor if in my weak heart it did begin,
Or with another lay.
Enough 'twill be if we safe heaven win,
And Christ take sin away.

THE SUMMER FLOWERS.

SAW ye, in yonder meadows
A band of maidens fair,
Dancing, and tossing perfume
High on the shining air?

No! we saw not those maidens:
Their dancing days have fled:
The frosts are in the meadows—
The summer flowers are dead.

WITH APRIL WINDS.

I.

O FICKLE winds of the Spring,
That dally with new-born leaves,
Or flutter the dripping wing
Of the mournful April eves,
Are you free, or sent, or driven?
Are you happy, or cursed with care?
For your tones seem partly of heaven,
And partly of wild despair.

The Winds.

We are sent from skyward stations,
Where in God we had our birth,
To plead with the heedless nations
That live for a day on earth.

For the future, we have warnings;
For the past, funereal staves:
From the land of sun-bright mornings
We call to the land of graves.

I.

O prophet winds of Spring,
If such are your dismal powers,
Why pause to whisper and sing
With the short-lived leaves and flowers?
Why woo us to hope, and dream,
And sun in the golden ray?
Rather roar, and thunder, and scream,
Or wail to warn us away.

The Winds.

We come as the great God sends us,
In ripple, or wail, or blight.
The sweetness we whisper, He lends us:
We roar in the strength of His might.
But most, when the storm-time passes,
We love to linger and play,
And sing to the graves in the grasses,
Where the dead sleep the hours away.

AN AUTUMN THOUGHT.

THE nesting days are over,
And, empty on the bough,
To every wind of autumn
The nest is swaying now.
There, late, in pensive quiet,
The old birds sat alone;
But frosts portend the winter,
And all the birds have flown.

O love, our home is pleasant,
And as the summer bright;
But smiles, and songs of children,
Are more than warmth and light.
We find our sweetest pleasures,
We know our deepest cares,
In sharing little pastimes,
In teaching little prayers.

But swift the years are flying;
All life is outward bound;
And we, beneath this shelter,
Must by a day be found
Together stilly sitting
Like old birds in their nest,
Our young ones finding elsewhere
Their life-work and their rest.

And further on—if further—
Strange feet will tread these floors,
And other hands be lifted
To close these friendly doors;
And other songs be sung here,
And other prayers be said,
While we, like birds of passage,
On airy ways have fled.

Ah! happy, if departing
From day to constant day,
No hope is idly shattered,
No love-bond torn away:
If honest joys that offer
Are seized ere taking wing,

And time, and change, and parting,
Leave no unnatural sting.

But God forbid that ever,
In wintriness of soul,
We hear, for vain repentance,
Death-bells behind us toll.

O sad is age that lingers
Amid the mounded past,
Around whose onward footsteps
Dead leaves alone are cast.

AD THOMAS CARLYLE.

"Alas! While the siege lasts, and battle's fury rages everywhere, what can I do with the Homers? I want Achilles and Odysseus, and am enraged to see them trying to be Homers."

—*Life of Stirling.*

"A good, wise, earnest piece in prose from you would please me more than the musicallest verses would."—*Letter to Dr. Bennett.*

O THOMAS, should all men be oxen
To drag at the heavy plow,
Or hook with sharp horns at the ages,
Even as thou?

Should each be a Thor, with a hammer,
To crumble the rocks into dust—
Threshing and pounding about him
With furious lust?

Should each be a grim gladiator,
With fists in his fellow's face?
Or a mouse-eyed attorney, forever
Working a case?

Would you banish the birds out of heaven—
The birds with their twittering songs—
And call their songs idle, and class them
With follies and wrongs?

Would you silence the drone of the insect—
The hum of the bee in a bower—
And hear but the booming of battle,
The shaking of power?

Is the thundering avalanche sweeter
Than snow that drops gentlier down?
Or skies that are bluest, less useful
Than skies that frown?

O Thomas, the thing that is lightest
Has ever some adequate place;
In nature and spirit is room for
Both grandeur and grace:—

Is room for the stern and the awful—
Destruction, and effort, and strife,
And the ways that are gentlest, and lend all
The beauty to life.

The mountain requireth the eagle:
The song bird belongs to the bower:
And some things are made for pleasure,
And some for power.

The manfullest hero and fighter
Rushes on to the battle with song:
And the music that, lilts by measure
Makes him more strong:

It strengthens the heart of the weaker:
It thickens the blood and the breath:
He grows to be heedless of danger—
Heedless of death.

He sees not the carnage about him:
He thinks not of children and wife:
He cries out "Now Forward!" and falls at
The front of the strife.

And long shall his widow remember:
And long shall his children lament:
Yet deem not his loss untimely—
His blood ill spent,

When the ballad recites his story,
And honors his name with praise—
Inflaming the hearts of others
To patriot ways.

O Thomas, this world would be crabbed—
Be dreary, and lonely, and hard,
Were lute-strings broken, and silenced
The song of the Bard.

The ideal would fade out of longing:
The chivalry pass from our lives;
And vulgar become the kisses
Of sisters and wives.

Not much would be left to soften
Their pain who pass under the rod—
Not much to lift up the spirit
In praise of God.

For song is the clearest expression
Of action, and effort's increase—
'Tis the voice of patience and sorrow—
The voice of peace.

'Tis the breath of summer and winter—
The strength and the sweetness of time—
Adapted to things the smallest,
And things sublime.

And ever, I think it will gladden
The life of those rolling spheres,
Where duration may not be measured
By days and years:

But where, because things around us
Are chiming and changing away,
We shall know that the sacred ages
Slow glide away.

LET THE STORM RAGE.

LET the storm rage, for we are safely shielded:
Warm is the room, and cheerful glows the fire.
Roar fierce Euroclydon: thy might is yielded
But to be used: roar on, and do not tire.

Roar, rage, and dash against the shaking windows,
And pile the fine white snow till paths are lost.
'Tis pleasant as the summer here within doors;
We do not feel thy fury and thy frost.

But stay! Come softly! Yonder in their hovel
Are my poor neighbor, wife, and children three.
Alas, that human hearts should have to grovel
Amid such constant toil and misery.

Brave blasts, I pray you be a little kinder,
For there is suffering in that house I fear;
And paths along the wild are growing blinder,
So freezing men know not which way to steer.

And out in open places are the cattle
With backs turned to the tempest; but their eyes
Are full of icy tears. Ah, fierce the battle
To keep alive, and many a weak one dies.

O God, that storms must rage, and life be smitten,
And all but few find time one lingering pain!
Where is that better country where men sit in
Unclouded joy, and suffer not again?

Where is that region, where we need not pity
The patient freezing cattle any more?
Where is that blest and safe eternal city?
Help all to find it, for the need is sore.

A PRELUDE.

I.

BBETTER a Bonaparte than a vile Communist!
Better one despot than many, say I!

Yea, better that peace forever be missed;
That men in armies be driven to die,
And wives be widowed, and orphans cry
In the boreal blasts and the shelterless street,
With haggard faces and frozen feet,
Than the imps of hell hold revel and dance
As twice they have done in the blood of France.
For never since daughters of men gave birth
To broods perditioned that died by flood,
Have days and nights so plagued the earth
With sights of ruin to freeze the blood,

As when the Commune was king of old,
And Reason, a harlot, was goddess bold,
And the *Sans Culottes* to the guillotine
Dragged priest, and noble, and woman clean,
And the Loire ran red, and the Seine, and the
Rhône,
And fleshly hearts were as hearts of stone.

II.

Those days were numbered, ah! not with the dead.
The fiends were balked, but did not forget,
Long biding their time more blood to shed.
With tear-dew still men's eyes are wet
For the tragic horror of La Roquette;
For the lives that ended in martyr deaths;
For the city burned that was great and fair;
For the poisonous and inhuman breaths
That cried "Revenge!" to the shrinking air.
Again has Reason put forth her power;
Again the Christian been made to cower,
And homes been plundered, and graves been fed,
And maids been ravished who should be wed.

III.

When the firm earth quivers and moans with pain,
We know that fires in the depths below,
Are striving some vent of their rage to gain;
And clouds, that under the blue heaven flow,
One day must break in storms, we know,
Perchance to ruin the whole year's gain.
But the clouds of thought bear a coming storm;
And the earth with mutinous heat is warm,
For the hordes of darkness are eager to form,
And sweep the gain of the ages away.
We hear them stir in hovel and den,
We know the skill of their tireless pen,
In pulpits and senates they have their say,
Unnerving the thought of the strongest men.
"Begotten of apes!" is their shameless cry,
And ruled by Reason they live and die
As apes-begotten that scoff at prayer.
But when beasts are loose, beware of the chance!
When Reason is worshipped, I think it fair
To turn the page that she made for France.

DESILLUSIONE.

THE blue-eye has fled from the clover:
The passion is gone from the rose:

The legends of morning are over:

The night the same stars will uncloze.

The bird sings—I scarcely now hear it—

The bee-hives hum under the wall,

And I say in my practical spirit,

“We’ll have honey to eat in the Fall.”

I look at the mountain; no longer

Its azure the Oread hides:

But nymphs that are coarser belong there,

Mules—braying all over its sides.

And the stream that is flashing, and brawling,

And racing away at its will,

Seems to me to be ever calling

For a dam and the wheel of a mill.

Our maids were once fawn-eyed and pretty :
They floated like doves through the air :
And sunshine enough for a city
Lay tangled and soft in their hair.
But to-day I'm unable to see it :
Taste cavils, grown harder to please.
Sure the fates that are cruel decree it,
For, of all things, the fairest were these.

Seldom now does the west wind come singing :
It moans; it wails; or it shrieks.
The cloud may be pestilence bringing :
The lightning may leap from its peaks.
I shrink from the grandeur of ocean—
Men sleep in its bottomless brine;
And the wavelets in treacherous motion
Seem as serpents that struggle and twine.

Which is better : the way I now see things—
This bare, unmistakable truth,
Or the dainty illusions and glee-things,
That fooled and sweetened my youth?
Is it better to come to my table
Dyspeptic and practical-eyed,

Or to live in a moon-land of fable,
And eat like the boy at my side?

No doubt, on the whole, it were better
If wisdom could pleasure enhance.
But if time makes romance a dead letter,
Perish time! Live forever romance!
Come back then, my youth, let me bind you
To vision, opinion, and heart:
Or let me go forward and find you
Where nature is stronger than art.

MUD PIES.

BEHIND the house, 'a play-ground
For the little children lies;
And there, they are noisy and busy,
Making mud pies.

I sit at an open window,
Watching their serious play,
And smile at the deep illusion
Of all they say.

For one insists that her way
Is better than all the rest;
But others, who do much like her,
Call their way best.

And my mind, from the scene before me,
Goes out to the world of men;
To the things that are, and ever
Shall be again.

Till I wonder, if angels viewing
The marvellous ways of earth—
The schemes and the anxious efforts—
Ne'er feel like mirth.

If when we struggle and travail,
And deem ourselves most wise,
They smile not, and call us children
Making mud pies.

INFLUENCE OF ANIMATE THINGS.

HERE, from my window, I can see
The cattle in the meadows stand,
And children running merrily—
A distant, lovely band.

They cannot feel my steady gaze :
They could not miss it, were it gone.
Their ways are just their natural ways,
As if no eye looked on.

Yet they to me are something more
Than puppets painted on the air—
They fill the landscape with high lore,
Because they make it fair.

They animate what else were hard.

They make things fettered seem more free.

They give its meaning to the sward,

The flower, the stream, the tree.

And though, to them, I am as nought,

And they to me are little more,

The sight of them has made my thought

Some brighter than before.

And not the humblest thing that lives,

But fills what elsewhere were a void;

Breaks long monotonies, and gives

An influence heaven-employed.

God made it for some human gain,

To modify the world's vast tone:

The sight of it makes pain less pain,

Makes loneliness less lone.

THE COMING MAN.

THE heavens, to-day, infold the Coming Man,
The happy heavens, made happy that He sits
Sceptred and throned in Godhead majesty.
But yet a little while, a few more years
Of pompous mental beggary and rant—
A few more years, lapsing from bad to worst—
Deceivers waxing bolder, marring faith
By vain philosophies and meddling schemes
Humanitarian, and He will come;
The Coming Man will come, in Godhead might,
To rescue friends hard pressed by endless shams
Of loud, vain-glorious reason, and by swords
That do the bidding of the Pagan State.
For he is not in league with Positivism;
Is no materialist; but like a child
Full of all meek and wise simplicity.

He gave a perfect system once for all,
And waits to see its working; waits to see
Who will be friends with Him and who will not.
Ere long He comes—The Coming Man—He comes,
And all shall see him standing on His Throne,
And heaven before Him flying. Then shall be
A cry to rocks and mountains, “Give us room
For hiding! Shield us from the face of Him,
Who sits upon the throne!” For there will be
Terror beyond the frames of speech; and death
Will roar in havoc while the earth dissolves.
But ye, O faithful band, who longing wait
The second coming of The Coming Man,
In patience shall ye not abide the time?
He cometh quickly! Let the world go wild
With speech and plan so radical that all
May see hell’s grizzly commune underneath:
This have the prophets told. But when these days,
These darkening days, have dragged their length
to blood,
When some have won the martyr’s jeweled crown,
Look up! Be glad! for o’er the hills of earth,
With speedy succor, and with sword on thigh,
Shall once again be seen The Coming Man.

THE CEMETERY.

THIS is the burial place—
This bit of ground—
For the populous district
Lying around.
And here all the people
Are steadily bound.

Each day they come nearer.
Each year, as it goes
Destructive and heedless
Of wishes and woes,
Brings many to find here—
Rest is it—Who knows?

Some boldly accord them
A satisfied lot—
The pious, the lovely,

The pimp and the sot—
This one thing is certain,
They soon are forgot.

What secrets are laid here :
What liveness, what pain ;
What bruising and heart-break
That find death is gain ;
What malice, what envy,
What flippancy vain.

The worldling behind him
Has left fame and gold ;
The rake and the harlot
No more may be bold—
Crime and its victims
Together are cold.

The young maid that dreamed
Of her love as she died ;
The orphan, dismayed
That the world is so wide ;
The clown and the scholar
Are pent side by side—

Pent low on one level—
The great as the small—
With sad upturned faces,
And ears deaf to call;
The darkness, and silence,
And mold over all.

The long years move onward
With indolent feet;
The lone moonlight shivers;
The spectral rains beat;
The wind wildly rages,
Or croons low and sweet;

And death holds them locked
In a seeming content,
As days that are soundless
When rough gales are spent—
Unknowing, unknown of,
Till graves shall be rent.

But when by the living,
And when by the dead,
The roar of the trumpet

Is heard overhead;
And all then here hidden
Shall rise from their bed,

What sights must astonish
The flame-lighted air:
What splendor, what beauty,
What pain, what despair—
Oh, God, who can bear it!—
Yet all must be there.

FUNERAL PAGEANTS.

COULD we but lift the awful veil that hides
The endless future from our heedless eyes,
Could we but see where Baalam now abides,
Where Dives moans, where Ananias sighs,
And could we know the fate that many meet
Whom the world honors with its brightest bays,
Would long funereal trains trail through the street
And panegyric flaunt the public ways?

Or, would we steal in horror to the tomb,
And leave our burden to its sad unrest,
Grieving to think that one has earned a doom
As wholly changeless as it is unblest?
Yet well we know, that many live in vain,
Whom honors crown but never can appal,
Since if to them be given heav'n to gain,
Heav'n is a hell, and not a heav'n at all.

THE SEA.

I.

ONCE—it was long ago—
While the noon shed out of the clouds
A tremulous, misty light,
And afar on a hill of the cape—
Wan, weird, and lofty, and still,
Stood a slanting pillar of rain,
With the haste of my feet, I came
Through a valley, that wandered and wound,
In meadow, and marshland, and moss,
And there was the Sea—The Sea!

II.

Gray, limitless, rolling away
Into distance, far mantled by dull,
Cold skies, it lay; and whether
Those slow, monotonous tides
Ran, infinite, on into heaven
With the grandeur and trouble of earth,
Or, far in the fathomless depths,
The base of the dome of heaven
Were low as the springs of the sea,
No vision of man could divine.
But heaven and the sea were seen
Interfused, interlocked, and as one—
Vast, mingled in struggle and strength.

III.

Then I seized on a shallop that lay
Half afloat, on the loose yellow sand,
And pushed it, and wrought at the oar,
On the top of the billows that ran
In ridges! but ever I paused
To study some huge craft, that fled

Full-sailed, showing spectral and dark ;
Growing spectrally dimmer it fled ;
Till, at length, it stood on the verge
Of some outmost convex wall—
The weltering crest of the waves :
Till it stood on the sea and the sky—
A moment immovably stood,
As, doubtful in which were its path ;
Then passed down the seaward slope—
Slow passed ; lifting up to my eyes
A hand-breadth of shadowy sail,
Like a signal put up for relief
By a drowning crew, or by one,
Who, parting from all that he loves,
Would utter “Farewell” to the last.

So drifting, I came to an isle
Far out in the sea. Around it,
White flocks of gulls sailed screaming.
Its low, sallow coast was piled
With tangled green lilies and fern,
Dragged up from the depths of the sea ;
From gardens of exquisite bloom ;
From vales that are green all the year ;
Where lie in a glimmering light,

'Mid mosses, and lilies, and fern,
'Mid treasures of gold and of shells,
The dead whom the waves have engulfed
And hold to the end. And I heard,
While I thought of the dead, a sigh—
An infinite sigh of the sea,—
Rising up from the breast of the waves;
And the splash, on the sandy shore,
Seemed the sob of a soul that feels.

IV.

Then I clambered high up on a bank,
By a fisherman's hut. There I found
A rude seat that fronted the sea:
And the clouds broke away from the west,
And the sun came down to the mouth
Of the sea with a kiss. Then I looked
On the face of the sea. How it shone!
How it triumphed, all glittering with smiles!
But, in twilight, its splendor transformed,
Faded, mantled with gloom, and became
Dark blue as the lips of the dead,
And capped by the fluttering foam

That lifts like the fingers of one
Going down to the roots of the world.
In the echoless air, its voice
Was lone as the prayer that is breathed
At the grave of a young pure child—
An infinite measure of death.
But while, in my chilly sense,
The horror grew fast, a star—
A tremulous star stole out
From the fathomless depths of heaven,
Where the clouds were cloven. It stood
Serene—a spirit of peace—
And looked on the depths of the sea;
On the purple, lustreless waves,
Slow-moving, unresting, and bound
Without definite aim, anywhere,
Everywhere—surely afar.
And I thought, as the rays of the star
Came down on the aimless waves,
“Thus the blind, dark masses that move
In the human tide of the world,
Are spent in dull, wandering ways.
Unknown, well-forgotten, we die.
Fate-driven, far-bound, our lot

Would be but a horror of death,
Did a star not shine up in heaven
To light us—the lode-star of faith.”

V.

But a wind came forth in the night,
And the sun, in the morn, looked up
Over mountainous billows. In anger,
The sea smote its barrier of sand,
While the coast, down long-stretching leagues,
Loud roared with the rage of the storm.
In might came the sea; in thunder
And shipwreck it came; leaping up
On the heights of the land, with cry
Of havoc and ruin; and men,
Who from infancy played with spray
Of the foamy salt on their cheeks,
Blanched white at its turbulent rage.
And some who, sailing in ships,
Were waked from their over-night sleep
By the frenzy and shock of the sea,
Went down to the soundless depths,
Where lie in a mouldering light,

'Mid gardens of lily and fern,
'Mid gold and musical shells,
Dead sailors, and men that were mourned,
Mute matrons, and maidens, and babes,
In patience awaiting the end
Far under the blare of the blasts,
And the maddened billows that broke
The great ships that sailed on the sea.

VI.

O, the sea! those days by the sea!
The sea with its wide-curving shores,
Its beauty, its pain, and its might!
I think of it here, inland far,
Where the prairies are quiet and soft;
Where the storm swift passes, and death
Rides not on the blasts of the gale.
To me 'tis the emblem of power,
Of yearning; the hunger we feel
For something unseen and afar;
Rolling onward forever to find
A deathless and happier coast,
That is hidden—that has not been found;

A region of music and light,
Flower-fragrance, and verdure, and peace.
But the sea will not find what it seeks,
If it search to the end—till its streams
Are shrivelled and molten with fire.
But I—I shall come in good time
To the shore that my faith bids me gain,
Far off, in a land of the soul;
And look on the stilly sea,
And sail on the crystal sea,
That is bright with the glory of God.

FRAGMENTS.

I.

GOD bless our sturdy native land—
Its prairies broad, its mountains bare,
Its rough, cold lakes, its rivers grand,
Its pure invigorating air.
And bless its blue, enfolding seas,
Its forests, springs and bloomy leas,
And all the powers and influences
That make this land the land it is.
For here are nurtured, here alone,
The tensest muscle, firmest bone;
The keenest eye, the sternest will,
And largest power for good or ill.

II.

They, quite too often, are the scum of men—
The very scum of men, who give us news;
They find a strange delight in publishing
The unsavory scandals that disgrace the times—
Clippings from far and near. The faithless wife,
The lecherous husband, and the prostitute,
Are all paraded in close-columned filth,
With gloating sneers of comment. Scarce a word—
A piteous word for fallen woman's crime—
A tear-wet word wrung from a heart that feels,
E'er glows among their lamp-black chronicles.
They are the scum of men; and mothers-in-law—
Those sainted women who have given us wives,
Helping to make our best affections ripe,
They speak of with contumely. Such men,
(No matter what their pride of place and power),
I loathe; for they misuse their office.

III.

All loveless life is a life of sorrow;
So better, I think, when a bird is slain,

That its mate be shot by the self-same arrow,
And end forever its lonely pain.
What shall it do, if there come a morrow?

Hiding away in coverts unseen,
It must pine in silence, and vainly sigh,
Holding it precious from joy to wean
The mateless bosom, the watery eye.
Not this; not this, be our fate, Pauline!

IV.

Ah, not to the finest promise
Is the fullest flowering blown;
And not to the sweetest flowering
Is the amplest fruitage grown;
And not to the brightest morning
Is certain unclouded light;
And not to the day serenest
The calmest loveliest night.
And not to the child the fairest,
Though trained by loving ways,
Is the certainty of virtue
Through a happy length of days;

But to him, who from his childhood
Takes God for his steadfast friend,
To him is a noble manhood—
To him is a peaceful end.

AURELIA:

A FRAGMENT.

PERSONÆ:

Aurelia	-	-	<i>A Boston Matron.</i>
Isabel,	-	-	
Chorus,	-	-	

IN BOSTON.

Aurelia. O, snake-haired Gorgon, that with flash-
ing fangs

And pitiless lips, blood-wet with lives of men,
Wanderest from land to land, delighting most
In populous empires, garnered full of gold,
And priceless art, and rich results of toil
And taste, and time; yet not disdaining wastes
Where men are few, and pass their barren days

With sheep and camels near some lonely well,
On the wind-beaten, melancholy breadth
Of Asian steppes, is there no end—no end
Is there, O war, to thy insatiate rage?
The light of ages, streaming on thy path,
Reveals vast tumuli of fleshless bones,
By every hill-side, and where vales are fair;
And every wind is pierced by hollow moans,
And wandering shrieks, left by thy victims slain
On fields of howling battle, to alarm
The conscience of earth's rulers, and abate
Ambition's tyrannous schemes, and the wild haste
Of hell's worst fiend, Revenge. Yet dost thou glut,
From year to year, thy unappeasable lust
Of human woe, as if the frightful past
Had not full-fed thy foul, immeasurable gorge
With steaming blood, and mangled flesh and bones,
And tears, and sighs, and sudden penury,
And lewd abominations. Thou dost fume
With never-lessening frenzy, when a spark
Kindled in hell is fanned by human hate,
As if the inevitable, tightening clutch of Death
Were not upon all heart-strings, and all eyes,
From natural causes, had not rue enough.

Is there no end, O, war? Is there no God
Left yet alive in the near heights of heaven,
To guide the rudderless float of humankind—
To quench thy vile existence, and enfold
The hapless nations in the white, still robe
Of His own peace? Or is He far removed
From things so small as the autonymous mimes
That sit in councils and in cabinets,
Or lift the multitudinous popular voice
For national honor—honor, that vile word
That screens, with tinsel, blackest crimes! Alas!
If God looks on, He seems to acquiesce;
And proud ambition, plunder, hate, and lust,
Are motives common to the prince and clown,
And rule the vital world. Why do we pray?
Can prayer avert the lightning bolt that cleaves
The stalwart fir whose music sweetens rest;
Or turn the earthquake backward on its path;
Or drown the pestilence in gales of health;
Or change the nature of the injurious men
Whose chosen instrument thou art, O, war?
Peace is not purchased by the bended knee:
The nations clash together. God is deaf;
And man is deaf; and wars will never end.

Chorus.

Up where the isles of light are shining
In the deep blue seas above,
Are bloomy lands of peace, reclining
Under a heaven of love.

There, never thunder, nor cold wind mutters,
Nor vulture is seen, or heard,
Nor snaky tongue its venom utters
In angry or guileful word.

But white-robed angels, slowly winging
O'er mountain and lake and plain,
Are filled with pleasure, and fill with singing
The lands that echo their strain.

They fly, they float, through azure golden,
Through woodland and glen they gleam—
Strong hearts at last the weak embolden,
And each has his sinless dream.

In many mansions undecaying—
In beautiful homes they dwell,
Where little angels are lightly playing,
Or pausing some tale to tell.

Where graver spirits fill with duty,
Or give to pleasure, a space;
Where worship is love, and law is beauty,
And the Christ in all has place.

O, seek those lands and homes of glory!
O, seek the isles of the blest!
For earth must ever be charred and gory,
And tossed by a fierce unrest.

Not here, shall peace unfold her pleasance
In confident truth to dwell,
Since over the world goes many a presence
Ascended from deepest hell.

Unseen they flit along their stations,
And stand in the halls of kings,
And stir to rage the pride of nations
Till a blood-storm roars and rings.

Till selfish hearts leave off their boasting,
And sicken of gain and mirth;
Till all desire, prayer-spiced, goes posting
To the life beyond our earth.

For never was man but needed urging
To make him his bane release,
And heaven wins more by frequent scourging
Than by all the arts of peace.

Thus war and tyranny have uses
Beyond the projects of kings;
They conquer abuses by abuses,
And show us the vice of things.

And hard is earth, yet sweet is heaven,
And strong is God's arm of love.
From even to morn, from morn to even,
Are shining the lights above,

That men may strive with patient longing
For the homes where peace has birth,
Or find at length their true belonging
With spirits that rule the earth.

Aurelia.

What idle voices are these? How thin, and far,
And like a wandering echo, dying out
To dreamy, insubstantial nothingness,

The thought of heaven. Who knows there is a
heaven?

Where does it lie—in what eclipse of space?
And why should heaven be different from earth—
One world be better than another world?
Must it not prove the injustice of great God,
If it be found some creatures dwell in peace
Amid the chiming splendors of the spheres,
Where every thought moves to a perfect act,
And every act is but a needed tone
In the great harmony, while all the while
This baleful earth is populous with hate,
And miseries illy borne by struggling hearts
As capable of bliss as those that have it?
Why is earth, earth; and why is heaven, heaven?

Isabel.

The fact, Aurelia; look you to the fact.
This life of earth is such a deathly life,
So full of poisonous darkness, guilty doubt,
And biting greed of lust, and gold, and strife;
So full of body-sickness, and of checks
Destructive of proportion in our days,
That in itself it has no real worth.

But yet, its uses are beyond all speech:
For it has lessons of content and trust;
Of patience and dependence; aye, of love
For men who mar with words and blows
The frame-work of the world. Were earth not
earth,

Could heaven be heaven? Were you and I put
forth,

Just as we are, amid the heavenly thrones,
To sully with our passions those fair climes,
Could there be peace in heaven? Ah, well it is
That evil men may do their evil work
Where times are evil; and when all is done,
When hearts have ready bias to vile ways,
The justice of God's judgment will be felt,
Forbidding heaven to them. But they who prove
Worthy of peace, will find the peace they need,
Where such as mar the safety of the earth,
By word, or action, may not come at all.

Chorus.

The woman hath well answered. Give her praise!

Aurelia.

I will not hear this venerable cant—
This reverend burglary of reason's house,
For Science now is God, and shall be so.
The fact; aye, just the fact! I stick by that.
I own the fact that I can comprehend.
Each age that tramps along the track of thought
Makes its own God; and this age, wiser grown
By knowledge of the folly of the past,
Stops short with inability to weigh
And measure. Science now is God—be sure!

Isabel.

Science is knowledge. How much can we know
With certainty? Shall each fall down before
His little bundle of material facts,
Or facts historic, doubtful as they are,
And worship them as God of all the earth?
Is this a thing to satisfy a soul—
A living spirit of ideal power?

POEMS:

1871.

GRAPING.

DOWN by the dull Cahokia,*
Just back from a sandy shore,
You and I went a-graping,
In the pleasant days of yore.
We sat in the glancing shadows,
Or roamed in the open sun;
But of grapes—alas! my darling—
We fetched not a single one.

Our baskets came back empty,
But our hearts were full of dreams
Inwrought with the warm October
And the sunset's mellow beams.
O sweet through the fading grasses
Wandered the wind's low moan,

* A stream in Madison county, Illinois.

And, piping their cheerful signals,
Went birds to a summer zone.

Your hand in my own was resting,
But few were the words we spoke;
And our pitiless companions
Shot at us many a joke.
But little we cared my darling;
We had plighted our secret truth,
And the world seemed a purple vine-land,
Hung full for the wants of youth.

Then, ere the leaves had fallen,
Or cold blew the northern gale—
Ere the sun swam low in the tropics,
Or the skies were chilly and pale,
The villagers all came trooping—
The greatest as well as the least—
To hear our vows' confession
Before the surpliced priest.

And out through Autumn's glories,
Or ever the day was done,
We had crossed broad river and prairie,
In the track of the hazy sun.

And the still night closed around us,
And Dian smiled bright above
Our shrine of the perfumed Hymen,
And the sacrifice of love.

Oh, swift the years as the passage
Of pigeons with silvery wings;
And deep, in their silence, is hidden
All tender and holy things—
The smiles, the kisses, the rapture,
The sighs, the unsealing of tears,
The darkness that fills with amazement,
The light in the west that cheers.

They are full of children's voices,
And songs by the cradle sung;
Of the shadowy gleam of faces—
Forever fair and young—
That paled in their opening promise,
And under the willows hide—
Ah, Heaven seems far less distant
Since the little ones have died!

And once again we are graping,
But not near the dear old home;

New lands are ever unstable—
Their people like Arabs roam.
We follow our children westward;
They will follow theirs to the sea;
Few men in the land are settled,
Or know where their graves shall be.

I like, in the mild October,
These rides in the country air,
The plats 'neath the swaying woodlands,
And the sunlight flickering there.
I love the merry laughter
Of the groups at the clustered vine,
And the glimpse of faces, rosy
As Mœnads flushed with wine.

For like a wind that freshens
One drooping, and moving slow,
These things bring back to my spirit
The life of the long-ago;
And I'm proud that these young people,
Like those of our youthful days,
Have pleasure in simple pleasures,
And love the old-fashioned ways.

But, for us, the scramble is ended;
'Tis time to be sober and still;
We are nearing the mist-covered river—
Are down at the foot of the hill.
Our baskets have ever been empty—
A trifle our slender store;
Yet only for you and the children
Have I ever wished for more.

I hope, when the final summons
Is sped from the ghostly king,
Afar, to a peaceful country,
Together our souls may wing;
Together may live in glory,
And round us the children play,
As once in the long-gone summers,
Ere some were taken away.

But now, my arm for the wagon!
The horses are placed abreast,
For the home-bound sun is nearing
His gate in the golden west:
And the wind, with murmur tender,
Dies out in a long, long sigh;
And the bird to his mate is calling
That the chill, dark night is nigh.

THE DEATH OF THE STAG.

THE skies are bright with dewy light;
The gray old peaks are softly glowing;
The hunter's horn rings on the height,
And the timid deer, in wild affright,
Leaps down the valley, where shades of night
Under rivers of mist are flowing.

Away below, the fleet hounds go,
Their music like far clarions ringing;
Away under tree-boughs pendant low,
Across dim meadows, glimmering slow
To a hazy dawn, and by curve and flow
Of a stream in its rock-bed singing.

Now there, now here—now faint, now clear,
The echoes of the hunt are flying.
Too quiet seems this atmosphere

For a skurrying chase of sport and fear;—
But oh! a ringing shot and cheer,
And the stag is down and dying.

A moment dim, the bright hills swim
Past eyes that gaze with weak endeavor;
Then darkness fills their azure rim—
The tepid airs blow chill for him—
A shudder glances from limb to limb—
And his flights are done forever.

But sweet its note, from rhythmic throat,
The hunter's horn is gayly flying;
It sails through glens, o'er peaks remote,
Its silvery echoes backward float
Soft as Pan's pipe, or pastoral oat,
Or the west wind's dreamy sighing.

LONGING.

THE leaf is yellowing on the tree,
The grass is fading at my feet;
The sad wind murmurs from the sea
Of things that never more shall be,
And cold and slow the wavelets beat.

Far off against the sullen cloud
A misty sail a moment stands,
Like a pale ghost that in its shroud
One glimpse of mortals is allowed,
And then must flit to shadowy lands.

Oh, sail far-bound across the sea,
Would that my fate were linked with thine;
That brighter skies these eyes might see,
And bloom-clad shores, where misery
Leaves not on heart or brow a line.

That I might clasp the pallid hands
Whose loving pressure thrills me yet;
Might stand beside her where she stands,
And wander with her through fair lands,
And all my solemn cares forget!

THE FORGOTTEN POET.

'TIS a ballad from Percy's Reliques,
Written hundreds of years ago;
But the head that planned, and the hand that wrote,
Forgotten, in dust are low.

The song goes on with the ages,
And earns well-merited fame;
But no one asks where the singer lies dead,
Or seeks to revive his name.

Yet sweet must have been the spirit
Could make a song that will live;
From stores more ample than he can impart,
Each gives what he has to give.

But little, perchance, it matters,
When anything noble is done,
That men, admiring, shall speak in praise,
Or a wreath of bays be won.

And one who has ended his mission,
And gone to an honored sleep—
Oh, what can he care for an empty name,
That struggles a place to keep?

Enough it is for the singer,
That his song has been well sung;
That it lingers to lighten the sorrowful heart,
Or trips on the cheerful tongue.

Enough it is for the singer,
That God, whose singer he is,
Has given him vision, and strength of speech,
And filled him with melodies,

And taken him up some higher,
Where the singer's harps are gold;
Where the singing is never ended, and where
There are none forgotten or old.

THE UNKNOWN SAIL

At Nantucket.

FROM out the indeterminable distance
There comes a sail,
That, moving landward—urged by stout persist-
ence

Of tide and gale—

Flies o'er the tract of intervening ocean,
A stately thing,
As floats a hawk in heaven without a motion
Of plume or wing.

And while we wait to learn her name and story,
And what prevails—
Or haply pleasure, gain, or dream of glory,
To lift her sails,

She shifts her course, and, gliding past our island,
 Is swift withdrawn,
Till her dim topsail looms like some far highland,
 And then is gone.

But the gray billows, with unceasing motion
 And utterance lone,
From the deep bosom of the ancient ocean
 Give back a moan,

That bodies forth a sense of separation
 None may elude,
The long monotony and expiration
 Of solitude.

Thus, on the highways marked by play or duty,
 We come and go,
And past us eyes that speak, and forms of beauty,
 Glide to and fro.

But, while we fain would reach a hand, or utter
 Some word of grace,
They swiftly pass and leave, with just a flutter,
 An empty space.

Vainly we cry, "Who are these — Whence departing?"

And "Whence were they?"

Just this is clear: across our pathway starting,
They speed away.

And be their lives attractive as their presence,
Or flushed with shame;

And be their homes with sorrow or with pleasure,
'Tis all the same.

They are to us henceforth as memories only,
That dimmer grow:

As songs that sink to echoes faint and lonely,
Then cease to flow.

Or, as the ship that with majestic motion
Drew near the shore,

And made no port; but the cold, restless ocean
Moaned as before.

INDIAN LOVER'S LAMENT..

THE summer is here, and the sunshine;
The prairie is sprinkled with flowers;
The winds through the long grasses murmur,
The clouds ripple down in bright showers;
And the birds and the bees are a-singing;
The youth fly their steeds o'er the plains;
And lovers for shy nooks are hunting,
And everywhere happiness reigns.

Ah, no! I am sick for the maiden
That wandered here late by my side:
I see not the birds and the sunshine,
I heed not the winds as they glide.
I think of the past and the future,
And my eyes are beclouded with tears.
The past is a dream that is vanished;
The future—what has it that cheers?

Here, under this mound, she is lying,
To moulder in silence alone;
She knows not I'm standing above her:
I call, but she heeds not the tone.
Oh, lately she came, if I named her;
On all that I uttered, she hung;
And, close as the vine to the oak tree,
Her spirit to mine ever clung.

She lies in a prison of sorrow;
The light never breaks on her eyes:
Her hands are clasped over a bosom
No more to be rounded by sighs.
In darkness, of friendship forgotten,
Unheeding, she slumbers away—
Ah, soon the form that was fairest
Must be as the formless clay.

The ages shall linger above her,
And still shine the pitiless sun;
The moon shall be tender and dreamy,
The feet of the light winds shall run,
And lovers and maids shall be gathered
In happy and endless embrace;

But for her, in the ranks of the happy,
Shall never be any more place.

And yet, I am told that a spirit
Was dwelling within her pure frame,
That has gone to a beautiful region,
In a country that no man can name.
A spirit, thin, pallid, but lovely,
With eyes that are mistless and bright,
And clad in a robe, than the grass-flowers
More perfectly spotless and white.

If so, sweet spirit, await me!
One day I shall come to thy place;
I shall seek thee all over that country,
And yearn for thy loving embrace.
Forget me not, spirit most perfect!
Let Korux remain in thy heart:
Again we will wander together,
Nor one from the other depart.

Where the light never dies in the valleys,
Where the winds never angrily blow,
Far away from the dread of the white man,
What happiness may we know!

And the vows now so painfully broken,
Forever and aye we'll repair.

Oh, spirit beloved, be ready!

Oh, wait for, and welcome me there!

TO ZEPHYR.

DANCE to me, sing to me;
Swift Sweet, and fling to me
Kisses more soft than the leaf of the rose;
Ripple, and wing to me;
Speed, speed, and bring to me
Secrets too dainty for words to disclose.

Fondly, O, glide to me;
Arms open wide to me;
Pour round my being thy rapturous grace;
Lean on, confide to me—
Be as a bride to me:
Sweet, I am faint for the breath of thy face.

Zephyr, come nigh to me;
Lisp to me, sigh to me;
Tell me thy passion; 'twill lighten thy heart.
Vain is my cry to thee;
Still wilt go by to me?
Well, then, I scorn thee! Poor trifler, depart.

MISTHER O'FLANAGAN'S ADVOISE TIL A COUNTHRYMAN.

O H, cum til Ameriky, Paddy,
No matther how good yer istate is;
'Tis a land wid a tech uv the carn-joos,
The chisest uv cabbige and taties.
A shanty here rints for jist nothin',
Or a cellar that's nice for a laddy;
An' the pigs runs roun' loose in the night time,
Gruntin', "Ate me, an' thanks til ye, Paddy."

As for biznis, 'tis plinty an' aisy;
Ye kin live like a prince or a Turruk;—
Unless they bring in thim low Chinese,
There'll allus be plinty of worruk.

There's railroads forever is bildin',
An' conthtracts is given away—
Jobs fatter than iver ye dhramed uv,
That clare ye two dollars a day.

Ye're a vother as soon as ye cum here—
Invited to parthies and balls;
An' they sind ye right aff til the Congriss—
An' the jails all has tumble-down walls.
Ye kin do as ye plase, an', be jåbers,
There's nothin' on airth to be fearin';
Ivry sowl here igspicts to git office,
An' smiles to the igziles uv Erin.

May the Vargin look swate to ould Ireland,
An' dhrive from it Inglish an' ill:
I've taken an oath uv alleginse,
But I am an Oirishman still.
An' this is the r'ason I'm lovin'
An' praisin' this land uv the free;
Ye kin sware iv'ry day to be loyal,
An' yit a true Fenian be.

So, cum til Ameriky, Paddy;
Bring Biddy an' all uv the brats;

Giv' yer lan'lord a taste uv shillalah—

Turn over yer hovel to rats!

Bring Biddy, the jewil—och, bliss her!

Hir ize like a diamon' shine;

Her breath is as 'swate as a posy,

Her lips is as lushus as wine.

TO THE SOUTH WIND.

O H, gently blow,
South Wind, and flow,
Along these barren fields of snow,
Till melt their flakes,
And winter takes
His homeward flight past frontier lakes.

Disperse his chills!
Release the rills,
To swirl and ripple through the hills!
Call star-eyed flowers
To deck the bowers,
Through which shall dance the twinkling Hours.

Waft feathery droves
To fill our groves
With nymphic songs and fruitful loves!

'Mid hill-side rocks,
Let bleating flocks
Respond afar to crowing cocks.

Bring odorous balm,
From lands of palm,
To steep my soul in tropic calm;
Subdue each sense,
O'erwrought, intense,
To stillness and to indolence.

Then let me lie
Where tall pines sigh,
And listen as thou murmurest by,
Or 'neath broad vine,
Watch shade and shine
Flutter, pursue, and intertwine,

Like human fates
That mystery mates
In troubled flow through life's estates—
A clouded dance,
A swift advance
Through trying changes of mischance.

Dear, mellow chime
Of summer time!
Blest voice of that entrancing clime,
Where never beat
The angry feet
Of icy winds and Titan sleet,

Along these dells,
Like distant bells,
Be heard again thy joyous swells—
Thy flute-note calls,
Thy breath that falls
An echo from heaven's crystal walls,

Luring afar
From moil and jar,
To heights where purple dream-lands are;
Forerunning peace,
And fat increase,
And all that gives our want release.

Prophet of wealth,
And jocund health—
Doer of charities by stealth,

The sick e'er bless
Thy soft caress,
And grateful smile, and suffer less.

Young children's feet,
Through field and street,
Bound playful forth thy play to meet;
And fond youths vie,
With thee to sigh,
When moonlight melts on beauty's eye.

Sitting at ease,
The old man sees
Thy billowy sporting on the leas,
Till, wave-like, roll,
Beyond control,
A tide of memories through his soul.

Thy gentle airs,
Beguiling cares,
Draw pure souls upward unawares;
Through willowy wave,
Thy lonely stave
Sighs, like a mourner, o'er the grave.

No tyrant thou,
With iron brow
And force to bend—no matter how!
No blustering knave
To roar and rave,
And prove to worms that thou art brave!

Heaven's blessed child,
Low-voiced and mild,
Thou teachest men ambition wild,
That who do most
At duty's post,
Ask notice least, make least of boast;

But courteous move,
Intent to prove
The wise omnipotence of love;
Faith yielding cheer—
And if not here,
Their names in light shall yet appear.

So, South Wind, blow,
And cheerily flow
Along these barren fields of snow;

Flow like sweet rhymes;
Bring sunnier times,
Dear angel of celestial climes!

MAGDALEN.

A BURNING, weary waste of years,
A torture of disease and fears,
And yet, alas! not many tears—

The heart must feel ere eyes can fill.
As farther and fainter the strokes be
Of bells on ships that sail to sea,
So humbled conscience spoke to me
With lessening voice, and then was still.

Ah, I have known fierce greed and hate,
And pride cold, but importunate,
And lust that never would abate,
But glowed through pain a fire of hell;
All passions with a tooth to gnaw,
Crimes, too, that skulk at thought of law,
And leave the body a sapless straw,
A moving mummy, a soulless shell.

And yet no blood is on my hands;
No pale ghost ever near me stands,
With eyes that burn like fiery brands,

My fitful slumbers to affright.

What have I done—well, I have done;
But deadlier sentence might be won,
And redder currents might have run
Across these hands so thin and white.

For I have sometimes brooded much
On vengeance; and have leaped to clutch
A dagger, keen and cold to touch,
With will at point to give the blow.

But force unseen curbed headlong wrath;
The viper slid across my path,
Nor knew how close for fatal math

Death followed, vengeful of my woe.

God lets him live. God's ways are good,
Though not by me quite understood.

Why thrives the man? My orphanhood—

Why was it defenceless and defiled?

I know I once was pure as snow,
My heart as light as winds that blow,

And cheek as soft as morning glow,
And eyes not fierce as now, but mild.

Then, earth seemed very clean and sweet;
Where things made single moved to meet,
A sure perfection to complete,
And nights were short, and days were long.
A good man reared me as his own;
By his revered name I was known,
And through our home, like leaves, were strewn.
Comfort and culture, books and song.

Till life moved to a quicker strain;
I loved, and seemed beloved again;
But love grew thorny and full of pain,
And what was asked, alas! was given.
It was not passion broke my heart;
I thought to act a wifely part,
Nor ever dreamed my lover's art
Was fashioned of hell and not of heaven;

Till, when our nuptial hour was set,
The groom came not. But guests were met,
And many spoke a true regret,
And hoped to see me yet a bride.

But long ere dawn that cruel day
The man had fled—none knew what way;
And I, a cast-off thing, must stay,
Nor find a shelter at his side.

Months rolled along, and with them came
A consciousness that burned like flame
Within my mind. I knew that shame
Must henceforth be my hapless lot.
I, too, took wings, and blindly fled:
Whither, I cared not. Let day shed
No beam upon me. Count me dead;
And be my name by all forgot.

My child—thank God!—brief space did see:
I was so full of misery,
Small vital force in him could be.

He sleeps, a head-stone at his grave;
Wages of shame procured that stone;
And harlot-fingers there have grown
Sweet flowers, that summer-long have blown,
And willows that toss like a wandering wave.

Years now I've wandered far and wide,
Restless, and nowhere can abide;

And once, upon an eventide,
Far in the west the man I met.
His eye was musing, deep, and cold—
A moment held, then sidewise rolled.
Ah, did he know me—grown so old?
But he seems young as ever yet.

I found his home, when darkness came—
A home well worthy of the name,
Since not for him, as me, was shame;—
His sin concealed, men deem him wise.
There, through a shutter, streaming bright,
Flamed forth upon the moonless night
The peaceful glory of a light,
And set a picture to my eyes:

A fond, young wife as sweetly fair
As any creature of the air;
And smiling, innocent of care—
Her sky of happiness unflecked;
Smiling on him who did me wrong,
As, with a gentle arm and strong,
He danced his boy to merry song,
Nor my near presence could suspect.

The boy, he wore his father's face—
The same bold carriage, yet with grace,
That to his mother I could trace—

And how could I but hate that child?
I thought upon a far-off grave—
A child that never pleasure gave—
A child no father sought to save—
On whom its mother never smiled.

And who was she who sat that night
Within the warm and lovely light,
In womanhood complete and white,
Content with him I should have loved?
Why stood I in the frosty gloom,
Foul as a creature of the tomb,
And saw another in the room
From whence, far off, I was removed?

My guardian taught me, "God is just;"
Believe it I am sure I must,
Since things unknown we take on trust;
But justice sometimes lingers long.
I thought, for many days, to be
The avenger of my misery,

And give that man what he gave me—
The hell to which we both belong.

But, as I hid from night to night,
Some spell my purpose seemed to blight;
Some thought my weak heart would affright,
Till to all vengeance I grew loth.
Let him enjoy what fate endears;
Let no want blight his infant's years;
His wife's sweet eyes be free of tears;
Alone I suffer enough for both.

So, like a wolf, I slipped away,
And they—are happy, I dare say;
But I—I live as best I may,
And kill the time that moves too slow.
Sometimes I'm here, sometimes I'm there;
But ever at a fight with care,
And ever striving to look fair;
And life is short, I'm glad to know.

For no man looks with sympathy,
Or ever speaks true words to me;
Yet do I have much flattery,
And looks that sometimes pass for love.

But sneers may follow the softest sigh;
And—passion gluttred—the melting eye
Seeks other faces as I go by,
Or studies the street, or roofs above.

So let it be! While sands may run,
I shall be outcast and undone—
The wife of many, not of one—
A thing few pity, and all blame.
Fair dames, I beg you, hurry fast;
And, gentles, ah, as you go past,
Let virtuous, stony looks be cast
On her you fee for hours of shame!

I'm so accustomed to all scorn,
Nothing can make me more forlorn,
Except it be that I adorn
A body daily growing old.
Oh, much I doubt, when beauty's gone,
And I am haggard, weak, and wan,
If fish may in my net be drawn—
If I may cope with want and cold.

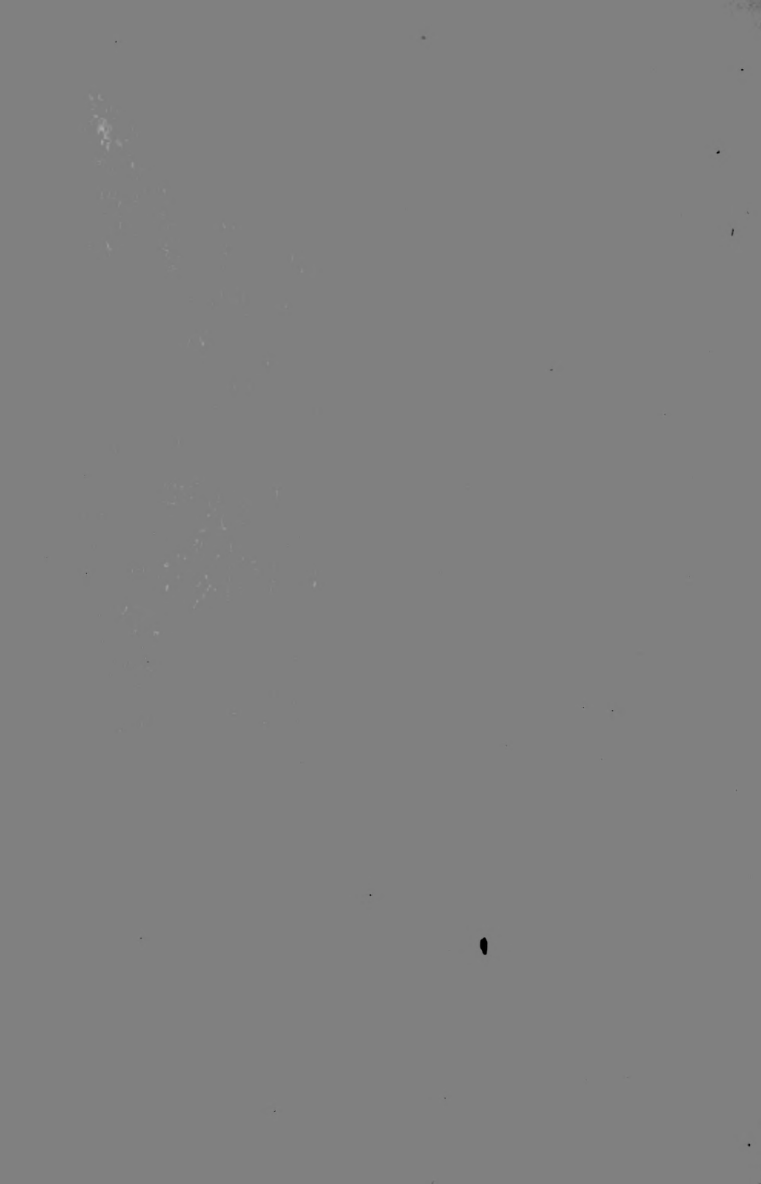
Perchance, when time shall come to weep,
It may be best to go to sleep;

I know a stream that's swift and deep,
Not far away from a child's grave.
If there I perish, who will care?
What face a saddened look will wear?
The world has many like me to spare—
Too many for each a tear to crave.

I sometimes wish a virtuous soul,
With boundless lucre at control,
Might greatly want to see me whole—
Almost as once, ere days of shame :
Might give of means he cannot need,
And rear a home to house and feed
Us hardened wretches, and would plead
There with us in his Master's name.

But this is idle—painful, too.
He who seeks me will come to woo ;
Inside the door you'll find his shoe,
When darkness veils the stealthy street.
Would he might come while yet 'tis day,
And bear this suffering frame away,
To moulder in the friendly clay !
And what is future, let me meet.

RELIGIOUS POEMS.



ASPIRATION.

O H, to be holy, as Jesus is holy!
Oh to be pure, as my Saviour is pure!
Growing, through patience, more humble, more
lowly;
Learning, in meekness, to toil and endure!

Constant through trial, to love and to duty;
Cheerfully bearing life's losses and pain;
Looking above for the land that is beauty;
Faithful in service before I would reign!

Never to doubt, since my dear Lord before me
Trode the rough path over which I must go;
Never to fear if the thunder boom o'er me,
Or if a gale from Gethsemane blow.

But, as a city that shines o'er the valleys,
Beacon to pilgrims perplexed by the way,
True to my Leader wherever He rallies,
Of His full brightness reflecting some ray;

Let me remain till the Day of Thanksgiving
Dawn in the white of eternity drest;
Uprightly, blamelessly, manfully living—
Then peacefully dying;—with God be the rest.

SAD HEART, SOW IN TEARS.

SAD heart, sow in tears ;
Gain, not to keep !
God tills by heartaches,
Many and deep.
Trust and believe Him ;
Soon you shall reap.

Into the furrow
Falls the bright grain ;
Clouds gather over it,
Beats the wild rain.
When comes the harvest,
Great is the gain.

Sad heart, sow in tears;

Gain not to keep!

Fierce if the trial,

Sweet is the sleep.

Rest for the weary—

Ah, it is deep.

IT MATTERS NOT.

IT matters not—it matters not
How little anxious toil can give,
Or how obscure the unyielding lot
Through which we move and live.
If hearts grow gentle, pure, and wise,
Deriving from above supplies
To guide the will and energies,
What else may be—it matters not.

It matters not—it matters not
If friends be false, or friends be true,
Or what the world may wish, or wot,
Or if it give our due.
Each soul within itself contains
A separate destiny, whose gains
Are some of peace, but more of pains:
So let all be—it matters not.

It matters not—it matters not
If times wax worse as they advance;
If fiercer grow the war of thought,
And lewder song and dance.
Reforms reach but the single mind;
No law of right the mass can bind;
A jewel here and there we find—
What others are—it matters not.

It matters not—it matters not
If measured sands are wasting fast;
If soon must come a day unsought—
That day, for us, the last.
Since all that moves desire or pride
Into oblivion must subside,
Eternity, quick, open wide—
And time's poor dream— it matters not.

CHRISTMAS EVE—1869.

COME, sing the angels' song to-night!

That song forever sweet, as when
First broke from out the starry height

“Glory to God, good-will to men.”

And sing, as love prolongs the strain,

The Mother mild, the wondrous birth
Of Him who plucked the thorn from pain,
And left His peace with sinful earth.

Long past His sufferings and toil—

The bloody death, the gloomy grave—
The homeward triumph from the spoil

Of foes too fierce for men to brave.

He sits, to-night, the King of Kings,

Enthroned above the throngs of light,
Who hide their faces with their wings,
And chant His glory, grace, and might.

The ages draw their lingering length—
Their flying change of sun and shade;
And hate moves nations by its strength,
And weakness is of power afraid.
Yet not reversed our God's decree
Foreshadowed in the angels' song,
That peace upon the earth shall be,
Good-will henceforth with men belong.

In humble hearts,—no matter where,
Nor what the fortune of their days,—
Hearts self-repressed in patient prayer,—
Hearts all unworldly made by praise,—
Are depths of blessing purely fed
By hidden force of changeless love,
That make the life by mortals led
Content as angel-life above.

The outward struggle, inward strife,
Are meant for high development;
We know what hand directs our life—
The purpose of each incident.
And, knowing all, we murmur not,
But bless the changeless, sure good-will,

That portions to each separate lot,
What best each separate vice may kill.

That pledges safety, but not ease;
Works by attrition, not by rust;
And brings us on, by slow degrees,
To perfect rest and higher trust.
We know the hand, we bless the will;
Come shade or shine, come tear or smile,
All things work good, and none bring ill,
For love is near us all the while!

So sing we, then, this festal night,
The praise of Him who once, for men,
Assumed the burden and the blight,
To give us Eden back again.
And this our carol should express—
With this begin, and with it cease—
He took our flesh our lives to bless;
He bears our load, He gives us peace.

RELIGIOUS DIVISIONS.

"Of old things, all are over-old:
Of good things, none are good enough;
We'll show that we can help to frame
A world of other stuff."—*Wordsworth.*

I.

WHAT might be done for earth, could man
Irreverent notions put away,
And feel he lives but to obey—
To forward heaven's well-ordered plan!

What souls might be reclaimed and saved!
What mental darkness, moral blight,
Would be transfigured in the light
That shuns a heart by self depraved!

Our Lord is torn by wrangling sects—
His body mangled as of old;*
Each sect is narrow, pinched, and cold,
And none its wicked part suspects.

For each vaunts “progress,” and asserts
Its large improvement on the past;
As if the best were always last,
And time-worn things have least deserts.

As if what Christ himself contrived
Might be amended, or improved,
Or from its settled function moved,
And into countless Hydras rived.

And feeling is put forth for right;
Authority provokes a sneer;
The times reject an overseer,
Even if he have true heavenly might.

“Down with a hero!” is the call;
“Down with the priest, and them that rule!
The formless mob shall be the school
From whence we shape our dogmas all!”

* “The Church, which is His Body.”—ST. PAUL.

Thus the imperfect is a power
That strives to mold what Christ began;
And creeds are made to fit each man,
And fall an endless, dismal shower.

Dark, hungry souls, that wait for truth
While parties wrangle and deceive,
Know not, alas! what to believe,
And perish without hope or ruth.

But this is safe for me, I know:
To cleave to forms and doctrines old—
To grasp them with a firmer hold;
For change is doubt, and doubt is woe.

II.

Thus wrote I but the other day,
And yet it was four years ago:
Time passes like the winds that blow—
So swift, so swift, it hies away.

And with it pass both hopes and fears—
Opinions pass, or suffer change;
The soul attains a wider range,
And grows more tolerant with the years.

For, after all, man is but man;
His views are blindness at the best:
Not here are certainty and rest,
But truth has many sides to scan.

The bird of passage, spring by spring,
Comes back to the familiar nest;
For other home it makes no quest,
But there, contented folds its wing.

And we, amid ancestral creeds
Scarce questioned, mostly take a place,
Presuming on God's equal grace,
And blind to many a truth that pleads

For our acceptance. 'Tis not well!
But better far by *something* hold,
Than filled with doubt and questions bold,
That savor of the deepest hell.

For One, who yet shall come, is Judge,
And knows of purpose, strength, and will;
He shall the faithful hope fulfil,
And his bestowals none shall grudge.

And He shall gather in His hands
Time's tangled threads that crosswise run,
And of His people make but one,
To serve Him in His heavenly lands.

III.

Above all names One Name is set;
The Crucified is King alone;
The great archangels, at His throne,
With humble reverence oft are met.

His lightest wish is their command;
They speed like lightning at His word;
By selfish preference undeterred,
Their movements all go hand in hand;

And heaven is thus a heaven indeed,
And all the worlds have certain peace;
But truth and harmony would cease,
Might every angel frame his creed,

Building on preference, or law
Interpreted by his sole light—
Might each one tamper with the right,
And individual inference draw.

One rule, and only one, controls
The orbs that fill unmeasured space;
And scientists like action trace
In natural things between the poles.

Man only would ignore fixed bounds,
Suiting his action to self-will—
Would tasks self-born, with might, fulfil,
And leave undone what God propounds.

IV.

Divisions are the seed of death;
They change to comets peaceful stars,
And desolate, with hateful wars,
All lands where sons of men draw breath.

God's kingdom is a bond of peace;
And he who on its spirit feeds,
Will leave untouched its simple creeds,
That faith and reverence may increase;

That brotherhood be not a name,
But substance felt in every heart;
Since good men, held by faith apart,
Are ready soon with words of blame,

And enginery of hate and blood.

The principle of discord lies

In what disorders and defies

The visible unity of the good.

Christ left His laws to loyal souls;

He left His kingdom for their home:

He built nor sect, nor papal Rome,

Nor gave his people separate goals;

But bade them harmonize, and strive

In one sole house of charity,

One kingdom of the bound, but free—

Dead to themselves, to Him alive.

NEBRASKA POEMS.

NEBRASKA—1866.

THE virgin of the wilderness,
She sits upon her hills alone;
Loose sprigs of cedar in her hair,
A vine-wreath round her zone;
As gray-eyed Pallas pure and free,
Expectant of the things to be.
No robe of art in pliant fold
Wraps her deep bosom from the cold,
Nor rustling veil, nor cheap disguise,
Conceals the freshness of her eyes.
Beneath her feet an hundred hills
Flash, singing to the naked hills;
And forest-belted rivers glide
Through prairie valleys, warm and wide.
Not hers are breadths of palm or pine,
Or sands of gold, or mountain mine,

Or dizzy steep, or barren rocks,
But farm-land vales and grass for flocks;
And over her, spanned in splendor, rise
Mild, changeful depths of cheerful skies.

She knows that she was born to be
The mother of a mighty race;
Heroic sons whom reverence seeks—
Daughters to wear all grace;—
That on her soil there yet must rise
Whatever prospects good men prize:
The pure church, up whose heaven-topped spire,
Creeps the long sunset's lingering fire;
The college in whose reverend shade
Unpolished youths are Grecians made;
And tasteful homes; and those calm keeps
Where musing memory broods and weeps.
She knows, elate, that she was born
To blend the sunset with the morn;
To add new vigor to the chain
That links the mountain to the main;
Till growing greater and more great,
She sits the peer of every state;
And all shall love and call her blest—
The virgin Mother of the West.

A FAREWELL.

NEBRASKA, dear Nebraska!
Thy hills are far away,
Thy bowery vales, where lingers
The long-enamored day.
But sweet the scented west-wind,
As flute notes o'er the sea,
Ripples from yonder sunset,
And tells my heart of thee.

What though day's dying glories
Last crown the mountain lone,
And many a land has prospects
Far lovelier than thine own?
I roam by mount and river,
I pass by lake and lea,
To note their mingled beauties,
Then homeward turn to thee.

And still the sea may thunder,
Far-breaking on the shore,
And still the windy pine-woods
Send back responsive roar;
And cool beneath the mountain
May lie the azure lake,
And down the rocky ledges
The silvery cataract break.

Far dearer are thy meadows,
Thy rounded grassy hills,
Thy sandy-bedded rivers,
Thy shallow, reedy rills.
For not a land is lying
Beneath the heaven's broad dome,
Can proffer such contentment
As fills the land of home.

Oh, there's a spot made holy,
Deep in thy sheltering breast—
A spot of calm seclusion
Where loved ones are at rest;
And there, when wanderings over,
And gone life's little day,
May I with them be lying,
And mingle clay with clay.

THE WEEPING WATER.

The Omaha and Otoe Indians, being at war, chanced to meet on their common hunting-ground south of the Platte river, in Nebraska. A fierce battle ensued, in which all the male warriors of both tribes being slain, the women and children came upon the battle-field and sat down and wept. From the fountain of their tears arose and ever flows the little stream known as Nehawka, or Weeping Water.

THE WEEPING WATER.

THE lingering suns crept round a land at peace,
While June, warm-eyed, was loitering in the
vales.

Long-gone was seed-time; and the sportive birds
Flew through broad-bladed corn, or 'mid the bloom
Of yellow melon-flowers, where slope the fields
Down to the Elkhorn stream.

But there was one,
Among the Otoe lodges on the bluffs,
Full envious of the mated, cheerful birds—
He, Sananona named, o' the Iron Eyes.
Who, dreaming long in virtuous discontent,
For that the summer kindled in his blood
And all his life grew languorous for his love,
Came with the sunrise to the wealthy lodge
Of his sole chief, Shosguscan. Him he found.

Reviving vigor spent in sweltering sleep,
Outside his tent. On long-haired coyote robes,
In the deep shadow of his tent, he sat,
One idle hand with a pet dog a-toy,
And in his mouth his pipe of blood-red stone.
Mutely expectant, then, the young man stood,
While grim Shosguscan, with half-opened eyes,
Looked subtly in the tell-tale, wishful face,
'Gainst which the level sunbeams streamed like
spears;
But all was silent save the sighing wind.

At length the sage chief spoke: "It is no foe
Lurking amidst our corn-fields, nor wise thought
Of public welfare brings thee here, I see.
What wouldst thou, Sananona?"

As when first
A school-boy, trapped in frivolous mischief, writhes
Like a thing wounded while his master's eye
Accuses him till he confesses all,
Young Sananona, glancing right and left,
Abashed and humbled thus to share the thought
That filled him as the morning filled the meads,
Unveiled his wish.

“Mine are the wants of youth,
Oh, great Shosguscan—youth, thou knowest has
wants.

To be the victor in all manly sports,
To tireless chase the flying antelope,
To battle all day long with worthy foes—
These are youth’s wants: but youth has wants
besides.

On windy nights, I sit within my door
Voiceless and lonely, for I lack a mate.
Small need is mine to hunt the shaggy bull,
Or lure the wary pickerel from the lake—
Success is bootless where it is unshared.”
Here grim Shosguscan, with impatient yawn—
“Oh! Ah! Well, take a wife!”

“Thou sayest well!”

Quoth Sananono.

“And what hinders then?”

Shosguscan cried. “Go, make deliberate choice
Among our girls; choose, win, and her lead home
That best befits your mind! And wherefore here?
Why speak to me of maids, and windy nights,
And sentimental loneliness; Not I—
I am no tier of true lovers’ knots,

No go-between for billing boys and girls,
No dealer in love-simples for sore hearts.
I hold myself for something different.
I am a warrior, Sananona, I—
A man of mighty battles and of blood.
Mine is the voice of greatness in our tribe—
The hand that destines all. Not me for love,
Not me for maidens seek; but find some crone,
That, as a quacking duck along the streams,
Leads forth her timorous brood! Go! Go! young
man,
From women seek your mate!”

Against this scorn,
Wrathful and black, young Sananona stood.
But as before his nation's chief befits
A youth to stand with quiet modesty
And humbled self-importance, so he paused
To smother impulse and select his words.
“I am not here to seek your offices,
Oh, brave Shosguscan, as a go-between.
I ask no man to win a maid for me.
I best can tell the secret I best know.
But this my errand: she who moves my will,
And whom with pure and honorable rites

I would install as mistress of my lodge,
Is not an Otoe; dwells not by the stream
Of the swift Elkhorn; but among the tents
Of warlike Omahas—a handsome race—
She honors womanhood and waits for me.
Her tribesman know our troth, and are content.

“So you would bring a foreign woman here!”
Cried harsh Shosguscan. “One who, in the days
Of vigilant warfare, shall forewarn her friends,
Bringing defeat to counsel:—one whose heart
Shall evermore be flying to the fields
Wherein her childhood played, and to the light
Of kindly faces she may see no more.
Have Otoe maidens, then, no ‘amorous grace’?
The daughters of your fathers,—are they worse,
Or less attractive than this alien girl?
Why shame your people thus?”

Then gravely spoke
The Iron-Eyed: “I cannot read my mind
To say why this I choose, what that reject.
I follow love’s blind instinct. If I err,
Mine is the error common to our race.
But love that blindly leads is seldom wrong,

For most are happy in their wedded loves.
Indifferent, I see our Otoe girls;
But when Nacoumah, in the April days,
I met among her people, then my hopes
Rose up and followed after. Oh, my chief,
Respect my need, I pray, and bid me go
To hither bring the maiden of the North,
And I, in times of danger, with my life
Will answer for her loyalty!"

Then stood

The youth expectant, pleading with his face,
That mirrored forth the hopes and fears within,
As the great Platte, when low in autumn days,
Near to its islands, on its glassy wave,
Reveals the woodlands and the forest-life.
And stern Shosguscan, musing on his face,
And running over all the honored past,
When Sananona, in the thickest fight,
Had borne the brunt of battle with the best,
And wrought great deeds, and won the hearts of
all,
Wavered, inclined to grant his moving suit,
And bid him seek his maid and bring her home.
But swift succeeded thoughts of what was best

For general welfare, and the answer he,
Led by a prudent state craft, ought to make—
Settling wise precedent. Then thus he said:
“Oh, Sananona, much I long to yield
This boyish quest, for I, too, have been young.
I know how whimsical this youthful love—
With what caprices unaccountable
The youth selects his maid, the maid her man.
I know how disappointment pricks, and how
The heart, defeated of its cherished aim,
Knots its great arteries and swells with sighs
And strives to burst. And I would spare all pain;
But this I know—for I, too, have been young—
That love has lives as many as the bear,
'That, filled with arrows and with burly spears,
'Scapes to the hills, plucks forth the barbs, and
grows,
Erelong, as vigorous as before. To-day,
None like Nacoumah: but ere wintry suns
Waste nebulous glances in the frozen gales,
Some other maiden will inspire your sighs;
For youth runs lightly into any love.
Oh, be advised! Go seek an Otoe bride.
Dismiss this passion; it will work you bale—

Nor you alone, but all. Go!"

And he went.

Straight to his lodge the young brave went, and
closed

His door, and with himself communed. As one,
Who, whirling through the country by a train
That flies the track and plunges down a steep,
Picks himself out from shattered heaps of cars
And smutched and mangled bodies of the dead;
Then feels along each bruised limb with care,
And slowly breathes to test if hurts within
Threaten life's citadel; so all his soul
Wan Sananona to himself exposed,
And weighed Nacoumah 'gainst the Otoe maids,
And said at length, "I will not cross my fate
Unnaturally in love. This argument
Shosguscan holds about a light-heeled lust,
That dances like a reed blade in the wind
Hither and thither, without settled bound,
Suits but with wanton age. Come then what
may:

If brief my life, let it at least be true
To natural impulse when the aim is just.
So, sauntering to the valley with a line

As one on pensive piscatory bent,
Soon as the woodlands hid his stealthy course,
He northward turned, and sought the lovely lodge
That hid Nacoumah from the enamored world,
And her he wed: and they had bliss enough.

II.

And days went by—the laughing days of June:
But yet the Otoe was supplied with meat
And wrought no havoc with the flocks of God,
But let the days, in aimless waste, go by
Amid his wives in the well-furnished lodge,
Content with peace,—with idleness and peace.
But when, at length, the women raised a wail
Of shortening substance and the grim-eyed wolf,
He rose, as one from sleep, and felt his strength—
Stretching his sinews in the pleasant sun.
And as an eagle whets his murderous beak
Upon the tree-top and the granite-ledge,
Or practices in cloud-land his fell swoop,
When, dropping from immeasurable heights
A thousand fathoms down, we see him first
A speck in the abyss, then soars and falls,

Rises and sinks again, and yet again,
Each time descending lower, until, at last,
He hovers o'er his nest and settles there,
The hunter filed his flinty arrow-heads,
Sharpened the hatchet and the dreadful knife,
And day by day bent to athletic games—
To run long miles, to leap a miry brook,
To shoot a reed-mark, and to overthrow
His mighty tribesmen in the wrestler's toils,
Winning great fame, and mastering his powers,
Until, fatigued, at evening home was sweet.
But when the moon was rounding night by night,
And the green hills were flooded with its bath
Of silver-streaming light, through which far swam
The sentinel eye—distrustful of surprise—
The Otoe passed the threshold of his lodge
In the great village on the Elkhorn bluffs,
Called forth his thronging progeny and wives,
And wended to the south.

So fared they forth—

The inspiration of necessity
Their constant guide—as through long ages, back
To the abnormal hour that bore to time
Their changeless race. But aptly framed their rules

For a rude justice, and the lack of law,
Custom, the precedent of use, supplied.
Among their bands no daft reformer rose
To paint the visions of his flighty soul,
And lead to lands hung toppling in the air,
But childlike and content they held and taught,
Without abridgment or an added grain,
To simple faith their fathers left to them—
Growing a rock-firm habit in their race.
So went they forth, as went in all past years,
And as still go in the deep spirit-world,
Their awful fathers and their lovely wives,
When on their annual hunts. The van was led
By warriors, who loved war; by warriors proved
On many a nameless but death-smitten field.
These, mounted on swift steeds—swift as the clouds,
Low-hung outriders of a coming storm—
Armed at all points with bow and lofty lance,
And murderous hatchet and the gleaming knife,
Rode dreadful on the hills or through the vales,
Scanning each shadow for a foe. Much need
For caution was there. On these hunting-grounds,
The fearful Sioux, death-sent, prowled tirelessly.
As when, along some blown Alaskan vale,

A herd of Caribou drags forth its length,
Seeking for mosses underneath the snow,
And at the front its antlered patriarchs
Explore the route, and lead the hinds and young,
That, feeding, follow happy and secure,
Behind them streamed the families with their goods,
Women and children loitering by the way,
Ponies with tent-poles dragging at their sides,
And the gaunt pack that bays the midnight moon.
And all day long, before them fled the game
Across the pleasant plains, or stood and eyed
From some low eminence of rounded hill,
With timid curiosity.

And thus,
Two days they journeyed to the south and west,
A June-time journey in a June-time mood,
And sport, and love, and laughter ruled the time.
But now was reached a fair idyllic land—
A land of rolling meadow, and of rills
That rippled through the morning like a voice,
Or filled the darkness with mysterious sighs.
Then, as ere eve the chief decreed to camp,
With noisy clamor, as a flock of crows,
That, lighting, huddle round a lonely marsh,

Some kindle fires and cook the generous meal
Of savory antelope, or prairie hen,
Or rabbit, freshly caught; and some brace fast
The lofty lodge-poles o'er an ample space,
And fold them deep in warmth-compelling skins.
The women, as befits domestic ways,
Spread the wide couch of soft and well-tanned
robes—

Beaver, or otter, or the delicate fawn;
And children stand beside the glowing fires,
Babbling between their mouthfuls with full hands.

But ere the tasks were ended, or the feast
Palled on a dulled and sated appetite,
From out the hollow valleys of the south
Rose tawny mists of smoke, and clomb to heaven,
And caught the sunset in wan flowing horns.
Then all the women were aware of fear,
But every man felt at his mighty heart
A sterner pulsing, for his will was firm.
And, as an oak that bears the rushing storm,
And quakes not at the thunder in its strength,
But gnarls and knots in stubborn pride of power,
So grew his muscles tense and hard as twist—

Conditioned for a conflict, half-desired,
But, as a brood of wild-cats, when a dog,
Snuffing along the woodlands, nears their nest,
Gather at once around the faithful dam,
The Otoe tribesmen hasten to the lodge
Of brave Shosguscan. Him they found alone,
Sitting before his tent; a massive soul,
And clear of vision as the evening star.
Wisdom and will spoke from his lordly face—
A presence that bends others without words—
Incarnate manhood's just authority.
Thus as he sat, his blinkless eye full-fixed
Upon the smoke-wreaths whirling o'er the hills,
Around him came in silence and sat down
His warlike tribesmen: but no word they spoke.
Long-time he mused. At length the deep-toned
voice
Rose, as a full-brimmed bucket from a well,
Lifting its treasure for men's needs.

“Ye men

Of Otoe, conscious in our strength to stand
Unflinching in the face of every foe,
And in the fiercest battle to maintain
Our right, we wander through these hunting-grounds

As inclination leads. If any doubt
Our purpose of free-action, or our power
To hold a ground once taken, let them come
And put constraint upon us; bit our mouths,
And tame us, as a horse, to know the rein;
Or drive us homewards, as a fox is sped
Back to his cover. In the face of all
We sit down here. We seek no fight, indeed,
Nor do we fear to find one. For this night,
Be wary; lie in bands, and be secure!"

But, as the brave Shosguscan finished thus,
An Omaha, that, hunting through the hills,
Had from afar surveyed the Otoe camp,
And recognized the tribe by many signs,
Came in with friendly words, and straightway told
How his own tribe were likewise on their hunt,
And two days earlier wandered to the south,
Meeting wild herds, God-pastured for wild men;
That theirs the camps deep in the hollow vales,
Whose fires had wreathed the sunset in a robe
Of saffron mist. So, then, no thought remained
Of foes and war; but, as a man derives,
In difficult places, from a true friend's face

Support and confidence and headless ease,
These neighbor-tribes, now for a time at peace—
Equal in numbers and resource of war—
Felt each securer in the other's might.

But on the morrow, Sananona, whom
Each day brought riper ease, by Otoe friends
Was hailed, where, richly-tented he was found
With slim Nacoumah, now his comely wife.
And these, with gossip, garrulous speech, at home
Discoursing of the pair, their secret soon
Touched at Shosguscan's ear. And for that he—
Judicial even in his social moods—
Never forgave a personal affront
Or question of opinion, but was harsh,
And, as the ice upon a wintry stream,
Cold and inflexible; forthwith he sent
An embassy of grave and warlike men
To summon Sananona to his lodge.
But Sananona, with shrewd speech, declined.
Too well he guessed the great obnoxious paw
Of the fierce panther, that o'ertakes the herds
Among the mountain valleys by the Platte,
Was lighter than his chief's official hand.

But, as the Otoe heralds homeward turned,
He to his new-made allies ran with speed,
And, gathering them—a listening group—apart,
Thus spoke: “O friends, O brethren, now—for such
To me ye are, since he who weds a wife
Becomes more surely member of her house
Than she of his—I claim your instant aid.
When first I saw Nacoumah, my cold heart—
That in its chamber dragged a numb, dead life,
As, in some hollow trunk, through wintry days,
Pent by the frigid darkness, clings the bee—
Flew, like the bee in Spring-time, when the breast
Of the broad prairie sparkles into bloom
With beauty-crested flowers, to find, with her,
Its natural human peace. With your consent,
Her have I wedded in all proper rites.
But now Shosguscan, the sole Otoe chief,
By messages sent secretly to me,
Commands me to his lodge; for he would cloud
Nacoumah’s days in widowhood, and me
Punish for preference that goes from home.
But O, good friends, I know your generous will,
Your courage, and your might. And more I know;
I know you honor natural love and grief,

And hate oppression that has no excuse.
I pray you then, be with me in my strait,
Nor let the chief Shosguscan do me wrong!
Much do I fear, lest coming with a band
Of sturdy warriors apt for forceful deeds,
He seize me suddenly. That danger past,
The matter may be settled happily
In council, tribe with tribe."

Forthwith replied

Nacoumah's uncle, chief Watonashie—
Watonashie, among the Omahas
Highest in rank; "O Sananona, hear!
No harm shall reach you without due offence.
I, these my comrades, all our warlike tribe,
Will take brave care that bold Shosguscan comes
Not here, nor plays at force near us, unless—
Unless," and now Watonashie looked grave
As one abstracted in a passing thought,
And fingered with his mighty hand the plumes
Fixed in the tough, smooth handle of his spear—
"Unless, indeed, he try a game of war,
And do his worst, and hazard all."

Thus, then,

The Omahas, alert to aid the youth

Whose fault seemed but the natural human way,
Stood forth to champion him 'gainst his own tribe,
And kept a wary watch.

Meanwhile the men
Sent by Shosguscan for the Iron-Eyed
Came empty-handed back and told their tale.
Then, fiercely from his seat Shosguscan rose,
With greed of vengeance rankling in his heart,
That one—a boy—scarce more than just a boy,
Defied the rule and order of their tribe,
And, gathering a score of stalwart braves,
Strode o'er the hills and neared the wealthy tents,
Of the stout-hearted Omahas. And, when,
Not turning right or left, as bent to work
Only his errand, and no parley hold,
He pushed direct for Sananona's lodge,
Across his pathway, shot a sudden bar—
Large-limbed Watonashie and warriors fierce,
A host who never turned away from war.

So then Watonashie; "Friend, wherefore here?
This seems a show of force! Are we at peace,
I pray, or do you come for war?"

As when

A gaunt wolf, wandering near the guarded folds,
Falls in a trap of close serrated steel,
And, stung by pain, and maddened in his mind,
Pulls at the chain and tests the firm trap's strength,
But, mastered, yields at last, the Otoe chief
Paused in the presence of superior force,
His keen eye, flashing forth impatient wrath,
And thus replied: "I come to claim my right.
Great chief, you know me well. Within your tents
There lurks one Sananona, who is mine.
For him, alone, I come. We do not harm
Your dogs that search our heels. We ask our own—
Just that. Give me the hiding fugitive,
And let our tribes be friends as heretofore."

Then spoke Watonashie, great-hearted chief;
"Young Sananona is, indeed, with us,
And wedded to a maiden of our blood—
Nacoumah, mine own niece. A nobler pair
No time hath seen;—he, tall and lithe of form
As pines that spine the backs of northern hills;
But she more moon-faced than these nights of June.
Much do I love them—I who have no sons
Or daughters, childless chief. So I do pray,

If Sananona, for some venial fault,
Has merited your wrath, this timely hour
You speak his pardon and receive his thanks,
And make him happy in his spousal days—
For his sake and for mine. So shall there be
Peace, and a happy auspice for both tribes.”
But promptly sage Shosguscan answered him:
“This youth, great chief, for whom you plead so
well,
With headstrong purpose and for boyish whim
Has broken rule, and furnished precedent
To other youths and maids and sturdy braves,
To scorn authority. In every tribe,
Order stands only in obedience;
And he who rules, soon loses just respect
If culprits may escape unscathed. So now
I cannot fault like his condone. All men
Have friends to plead in their excuse; and faults,
Beginning small, pass quickly on to worse:
Confusions come, and anarchy and hate.
A fountain, as it rises, may be choked,
But none can quell a river.”

Slowly, then,
Watonashie, as one half-musing, said:

“How much man prizes selfish sovereignty.
He makes a rule accordant with his thought,
And none shall break it with impunity.
The happiness of units is a toy
Weighed 'gainst a chief's command. This is not
well!
Better relax a rule, than crush a life
Where no crime is.” And then he paused, as one
Who offers opportunity of speech.
But silence reigned; no word the Otoe. chief
Uttered; but stood defiant in his post,
As one who will not yield. Then to his height
The mighty-limbed Watonashie drew up
His length enormous, and his fearful hand,
Bony and vast, with threatening gesture raised,
And flashed his furious eyes like shooting-stars,
And in a voice of roaring thunder cried,
“He you seek, imperious warrior, sits
At ease within my tent; within *my* tent!
Go, take him if you can! but, ere you go,
Weigh well the outcome. You shall slip in blood
Sooner than he, unless my might prove less
Than yours: of that make trial when you will!”

To him Shosguscan, with a baleful face,
But calmly, answered: "Do not doubt that I
Will take young Sananona from your tent.
I will not yield the right, except to force
I am unequal to oppose." So, then,
He turned, and with him went the Otoe braves
Back o'er the hills, and sought the Otoe tents.
Then did Watonashie, restraining those
Who longed to slay Shosguscan where he stood,
Or chase him homeward like a flying stag,
Gather his honored chiefs and well-tried braves,
From near or far, and prudent council hold,
And war-like preparation make.

So, too,

Shosguscan called his Otoe warriors forth,
And bade them summon up their utmost might,
And fail not to avenge their chief's affront.

But when next morning, timorous and cold,
Flushed o'er the east like one who, half-awake,
Unfolds a drowsy eye, puts forth an arm,
And takes a glimmering prospect of his room,
The Otoe and the Omaha, well-armed,
Banded for fight and swept across the hills—

Seeking, not waiting, for the foe. And as,
Along that green and dewy-gleaming land,
The level sunrise streamed an amber flood,
The very prairies seemed to move and slip,
As in an earthquake. Host drew near to host,
Masses opaque, swart, thundering on fierce steeds,
Or running with fleet foot. 'Gainst the low sun
Their cold spears glittered like a sun-glazed sea,—
Brandished with threats and hate. Then with a
crash,

As when in August-storms, among the bluffs
Above the Platte, or on its heated plain,
Reverberating thunders peal and bound,
The fierce tribes met, and each to each with whoop
Answered—whoop dire as shriek of maddened fiends
Weltering upon the surges of remorse.

Then deeds of daring might were done, and hosts
Battled for sovereign rites, and for the laws
Of hospitality. The vanquished asked
No quarter; none the victors gave. The war
Was no pretence, no hollow sham disguised
To gain a footing for diplomacy;
But every blow meant death, and death rejoiced,

And spread his bloody meshes wide for all.
But Sananona, who from far had watched
The progress of the battle, and the death
Of many warriors saw, turned, sick at heart
And moaning in his grief, and sought the tent
That hid his bride Nacoumah. Her he found
Engaged in sweet domestic ways, alone
In the wide tent. Within his arm her waist
He drew, and fondly kissed her beauteous cheek,
And wept, and said, "Farewell, oh love, farewell.
My time has come; the tribes too long have fought;
Too long death ravened on the innocent—
And I sole cause of war. But, if I die,
No need of battle or of blood remains.
No other family must forever mourn
For my offence, or all will curse my name,
And in the coming times will haply say,
'He loved himself; he lived and saw the sun,
But had no will to spare the braves who died,
No pity on their children or their wives.'"
And him Nacoumah answered through her tears:
"Dear, noble heart, go, battle with our friends;
Go do great deeds, and win a name for me.
Why speak of death? The grave is dark and foul—

Forgotten soon, and no man loves the grave.
Have I no charms? and care you not to see
Your prattling children playing at the door
Of the dear lodge? O speak no more of death.”
But he replied: “I am not left to choose
Or life or death, the arms of wife and babe,
Or the fierce worm. Fate has made choice for me.
Through all last night, while you slept at my side,
A shadow, with moon-eyes, and chilly touch
Stood over me, and breathed, in hollow voice,
‘Come, Sananona, come: the grave is made,
The worm awaits!’ But just at morning light,
A sun-bright figure with a happy face
Displaced the bodiless spectre of the night,
And told me that to-day my life shall be
Far, far away, among the prairie hills
And blooming valleys of the land of souls.
I go to meet my fate; but I shall look
Athwart the gates of morning year by year,
And peer in every coming woman’s face,
Matron or maiden, hoping e’er for you.
Farewell, then, oh, farewell.”

So in the long

And painful rapture of a last embrace,

They clung with tears, and bitter, aching hearts,
Till Sananona, summoning his strength,
His true Nacoumah's fond arms disengaged,
Put on the stolid look an Indian wears,
And turned away and sought the bloody field.
Where fiercest strained the fight he came, and cried,
"Hold, Otoes, Omahas, ye warriors brave!
No further need is there of blood and hate.
I come to end this cruel war, and save
Your women's eyes from tears, your babes from
want.
Live you, but let me die!—mine the war's cause,
Mine be its latest woe. But you henceforth
Be friends!"

Then from the conflict paused the hosts
At gaze, while Sananona, with unfaltering foot
Strode to Shosguscan, and bowed down his head
Submissive to his fate; as he would say
"Strike! have thy vengeance and fulfill thy cause!"
But while the chief stood indecisive, poised
'Mid diverse motives, from the dusky ranks
Of furious warriors closely round him ranged,
A bow-string twanged, an arrow glanced and flew
Fatal to Sananona. Straight it drove

To his brave heart, and the hot blood was seen,
And he fell backward as a bison falls,
Shot at its pasture; yet a moment life
Lingering, he cried "Nacoumah!" then he lay
Silent and dead upon the bloody grass.
But a wan cloud, that in the midmost heaven
Had gathered unperceived in the sun's path,
Sent forth a frightful wail of frightened winds,
And scattered tearful drops, and, from its edge
Sulphureous, whirled a luminous, hissing bolt,
Along whose wake the thunder ran and roared
Above the hosts. Great horror fell on all.
But the cloud slipped away into thin air,
The sweet wild winds sang a sweet song of June,
And the sun shone.

Then to the Omahas
Shosguscan said: "Why do we stand at war?
The end I sought is reached; due penalty
Exacted from the insubordinate.
Had I myself for Sananona's fault
Awarded punishment, his life, perhaps,
Had not been forfeit. But I do rejoice
That he, by me unswerved, before you all
His blame confessing, finds his just desert.

In after years, when these vast hosts are gone,
And other warriors roam these flowery plains,
It shall be told by many an evening fire,
For youth's instruction, how this young man brought
Two peaceful tribes to fearful chance of war,
And compassed his own death by headlong lust
That mocked at duty. Sananona's name
Shall then be synonym of scorn of law,
Of disobedience. So others all,
By his sad fate and this brief war forewarned,
Shall settle to their places with content,
And just authority no more be spurned.
Now let the calumet be lit and passed,
And Omaha and Otoe be sure friends,
As heretofore."

But stout Watonashie,
Turning half way to his own men, replied:
"'Twixt me and that fierce wolf can be no peace!
What was this Sananona's fault? His fault?—
He wed a daughter of the Omaha—
A slip of my own stock. For this alone—
Because he followed where love's instinct led,
And prized the natural hunger of the heart
As something better than a beast's desire,

As quite too sacred for another's will
To guide or thwart, he lies here dead to-day.
But now this crafty chief, Shosguscan, he
Who is at blame for all this bloody work,
Would point a moral with the young man's name—
Victim of pitiless vengeance—and ourselves
Having dishonored by this show of war,
From which he gains his end, would pause and
smoke

The peace-pipe in a handsome covenant,
And crawl away, himself secure from harm.
This must not be! Good friends, it shall not be!
My arm aches for reprisal, and my will
Exacts from battle yon disturber's blood.
No talk of peace be here!"

Then flew the spears;
The barbed, sharp arrows hissed along the air,
And the hot hosts strained to death's furious work.
As when along the bottoms by the streams,
In Autumn, when the dense tall grass is dry,
Two surging fires, by opposite currents driven,
Eat all before them over untold miles,
And leave behind no thick tall spire of grass,

Or tough brown weed, but charred black clumps
of roots,
Unsightly, on the desolated fields,
So all day long, through feverish hours of noon,
Till the great sun lay low above the hills,
The adverse hosts each through the other whirled,
And death made brutal havoc, and the field
Was black and bloody with the fallen dead.
But as the sun, descending, touched the hills,
And the last breath of winds, that die away
With sunset, sighed across the world, two chiefs—
The Omaha, the Otoe, now the sole
Survivors of that brave, infuriate day—
Bleeding with many wounds, but black with hate,
Drew to each other o'er the slippery field.
Then spoke Watonashie: "Shosguscan, fiend,
We are well-met at last; come find thy death;
And by the evening fire in after times,
It shall be told their children, by the old,
How Sananona died for hapless love,
Forbidden by his chief; and also how
The fierce Shosguscan, who held hearts as cheap,
And felt no sympathy with others' pain,

Destroyed two tribes entire, and died himself,
And left his carcass to the croaking crows."

To him Shosguscan, weary with his wounds,
And sick at heart for all his warrior's slain,
Yet full of wrath, "I know that death is near,
Nor would I live, shorn of all majesty
In these I mourn. For them alone I lived;
With them 'tis just to die. I stood to-day
A champion of authority and law,
But thou of wilfulness and anarchy.
And both have lost. But I would fight again
This dreadful fray, and sacrifice, besides,
The tender mother and her prattling child,
Unconscious of my thought, rather than yield
This cause. I could not brook that each should be
An individual law, for turbulence
And personal assertion, more than death,
I dread. But thou, Watonashie, stand forth!
The hour demands far else than braggart words,
For I am proved in battle, and have seen
Thy whole tribe fall. Thou, too, shalt die; the
sun
Shall never look upon thy face again,

Living. Now share thy tribesmen's fate!"

As when,

Upon the broad, smooth current of a stream,
Two iron rams, with long, steel-pointed beaks,
Lunge at each other's sides, or sterns, or keels
Below the water-line, seeking some place
Vulnerable to open to the flood,
Or hurl, against the iron-plated mail
Of their thick sides, enormous weight of shot,
Or ponderous shell, screaming and glad for death,
Till both, crushed in their seams by monstrous
blows,

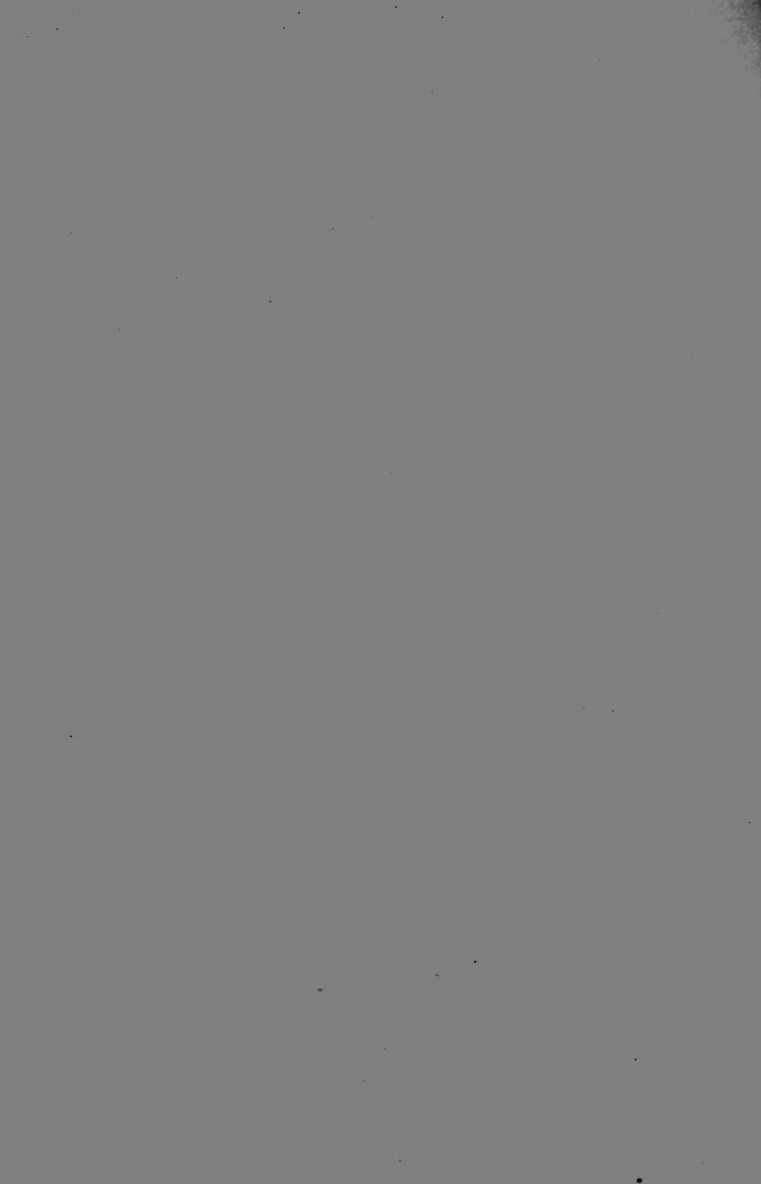
Settle and sink sudden into the depths,
And death o'ertakes the crews, and all is still,
The fierce chiefs plied each other with their spears,
And, coming closer, drew their fearful knives,
And grappled in a struggle fierce, but short,
And fell, close-locked, in death.

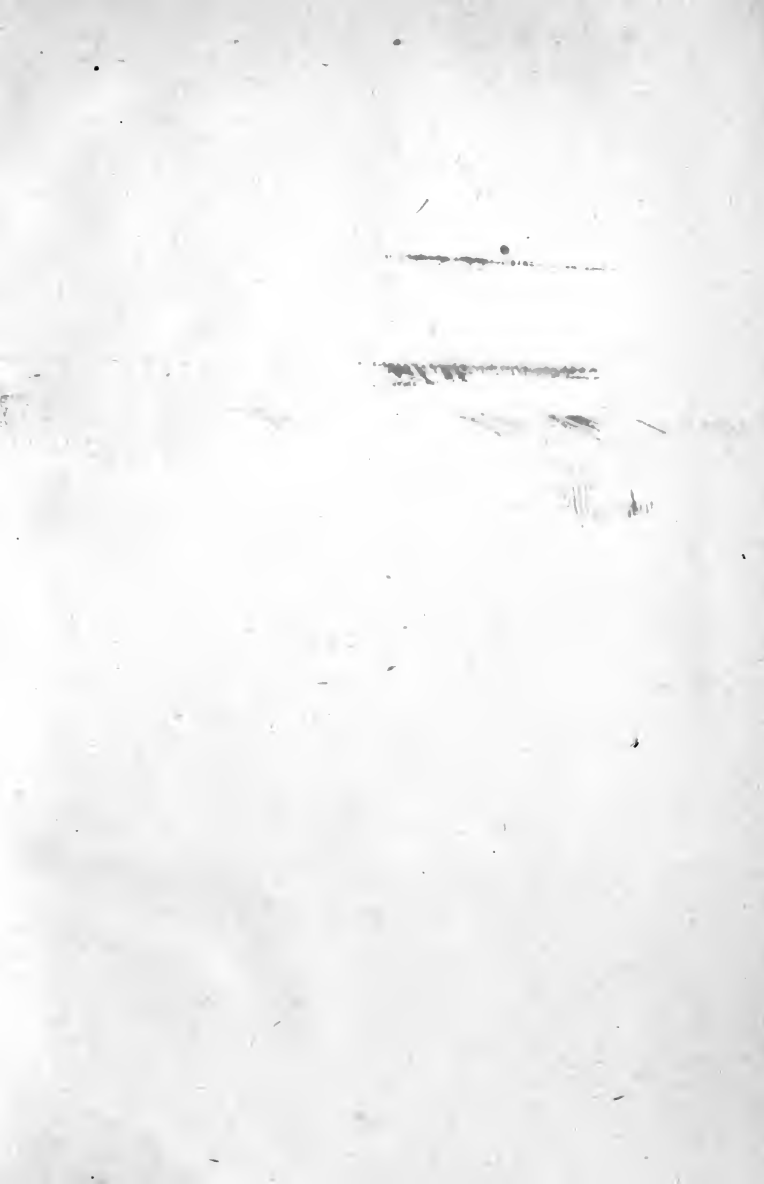
By this, the rim
Of western hills, in the cold, wasting light,
Grew indiscriminate; but up the east
Hung, in gray peaceful depths, the full-orbed moon.
Utterly silent was the field of death.
So then the women, who from far had marked

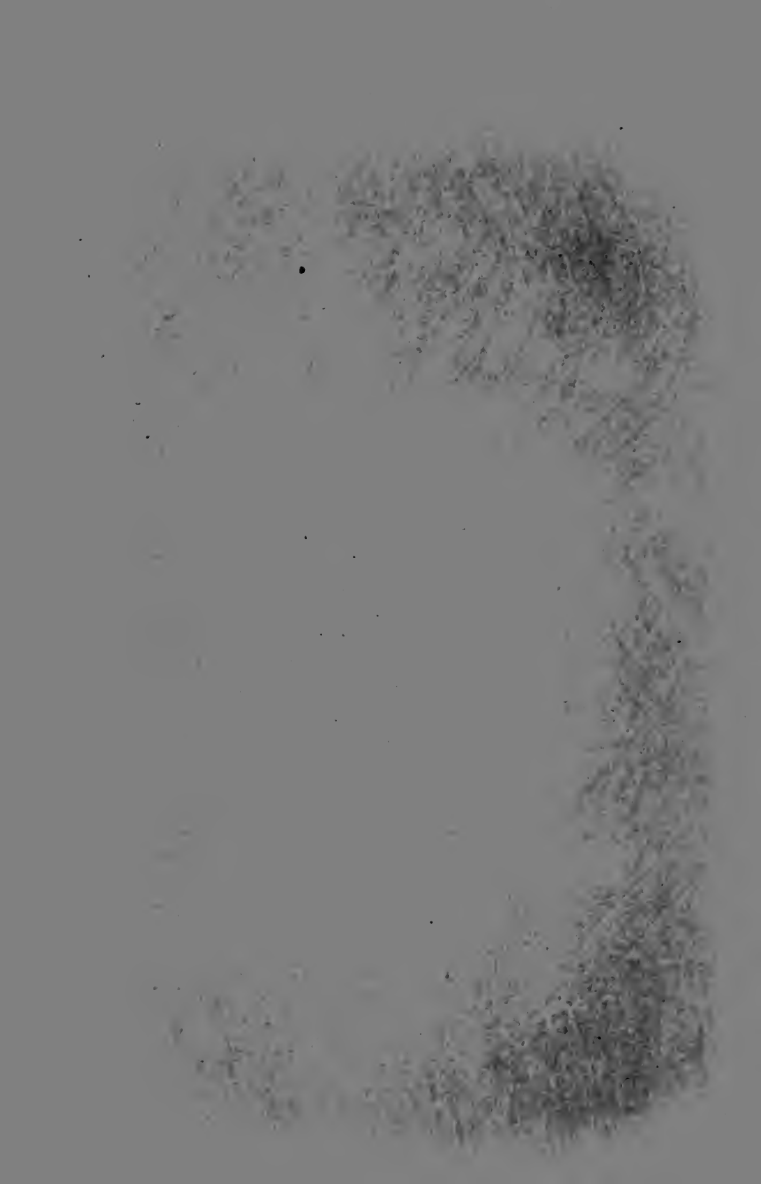
The waning battle as their heroes fell,
And heard the shouts of triumph, and the moans
Of men death-stricken, fainter grow and cease,
Warned by the ominous stillness of the eve,
Stole, timid, with all orphaned youths and maids,
And infants hushed, as by a ghostly fear,
Across that dreadful field of moon-lit death,
Searching for husbands, brothers, sons.
As when a mother doe, with spotted fawn,
Hides by a runnel in some cool, blue glen,
While the brave stag climbs out on some near hill,
Observant of the huntsman and the hounds,
But, venturing too far, a stealthy shot
Reaches his vitals, and he turns and flies,
Bleeding, and falls before his mate, and dies,
But she and the weak fawn smell o'er his wounds,
And lick his face, and moan, and from their eyes,
Lustrous and large, fall piteous tears, so then,
When all their slain had found and turned them o'er,
And knew the light might never break again
In kindling glances from death-faded eyes,
They sat them down through lingering, painful
hours
Of the dim night, and, without utterance, wept.

But when the moon, down her accustomed path
Descending, touched the west, He who o'errules
Particular troubles to the general good,
And pities all, and knows the loyal worth
Of true wives' tears, and tears of children—such
As weep a father slain—He, pitying, sent
A sympathetic shudder through the earth,
And the dead warriors sank to graves of calm.
But all the tears of children and of wives,
In a green hollow of the lonely hills,
He gathered in a fountain, that the sun
Dries not in summer heats, but crystal pure
O'erbrims and murmurs through the changing year.
Forever on it flows, that gentle stream,
Fountained by tears, and glides among the hills—
Ne-hawka—in a valley of its own,
And passes happy homes, and smiling farms,
And rolling meadows spotted o'er with flocks
That drink its sweet, cool waters; and so on
Past groves of leafy hickory, and beneath
Low-painted bridges, rumbling to a team,
It moves a broadening current, swelled by rains
Or the chill ooze of Spring-dissolving snows,
And mirrors back the splendors of the sun,

And the cold moon, and the wide stream of stars,
Until, at length, it lingers at the marge
Of the untamable Missouri flood,
As loath to mingle its love-hallowed tears
With that fierce, sandy rage; then looks its last
On the sweet heavens, by passing day or night,
And sinks beneath the yeasty, boiling waves,
Whose like for might and fury earth has not.







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